

Secrets

Brill's Studies in Intellectual History

General Editor

Han van Ruler (*Erasmus University Rotterdam*)

Founded by

Arjo Vanderjagt

Editorial Board

C.S. Celenza (*Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore*) –
M. Colish (*Yale University*) – J.I. Israel (*Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton*) –
A. Koba (*University of Tokyo*) – M. Mugnai (*Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa*) –
W. Otten (*University of Chicago*)

VOLUME 231

The titles published in this series are listed at brill.com/bsih

Secrets

*Humanism, Mysticism, and Evangelism in Erasmus
of Rotterdam, Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet, and
Marguerite de Navarre*

By

Jacob Vance



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: The Parable of the Sower by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). Print, woodcut. Inv# 12838n.
© Hamburger Kunsthalle/bpk. Photo by Christoph Irrgang. Art Resource, NY.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Vance, Jacob.

Secrets : humanism, mysticism, and evangelism in Erasmus of Rotterdam, Bishop Guillaume Bricconnet, and Marguerite De Navarre / by Jacob Vance.

pages cm. — (Brill's studies in intellectual history, ISSN 0920-8607 ; Volume 231)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-28124-0 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-90-04-28125-7 (e-book) 1. Christianity and religious humanism. 2. Secrecy—Religious aspects—Christianity. 3. Evangelicalism. 4. Erasmus, Desiderius, –1536. 5. Bricconnet, Guillaume, 1470?–1534. 6. Marguerite, Queen, consort of Henry II, King of Navarre, 1492–1549. I. Title.

BR128.H8V36 2014

274'.06—dc23

2014026906

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual “Brill” typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0920-8607

ISBN 978-90-04-28124-0 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-28125-7 (e-book)

Copyright 2014 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Global Oriental and Hotei Publishing.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

To the Memory of Eugene A. Vance (1934–2011)



Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction: Secrets in Humanist, Mystical, and Evangelical Literature 1

- 1 Secrets between Philosophy, Biblical Interpretation, and Literature: Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466/9–1536) 20
 - 2 Mysticism and Aesthetics in French Evangelical Humanism (1450–1536) 50
 - 3 Mystical and Courtly Secrets: Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549) 86
 - 4 Evangelical Secrecy and Courtly News: The *Heptameron* (1559) 130
- Conclusion: Secrecy and Covers between Literature, Philosophy, and Theology 160
- Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Works 163
- Index 177

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Marshall Brown, Tom Conley, Phillip E. Lewis, Christie A. McDonald, Stephen G. Nichols, Michael Rosengarten, and Nancy S. Struever. He also wishes to thank Emory University, Harvard University, The Johns Hopkins University, the Houghton Library, the Milton S. Eisenhower Library, and the Widener Library for helping to bring this work to light.

Introduction: Secrets in Humanist, Mystical, and Evangelical Literature

Secrecy, Humanism, and Mysticism

Why did secrecy become a relevant and pressing question in early modern France? How did early modern authors develop patristic and medieval ideas on secrecy to fuel their reform movements? How did these authors draw on the Western mystical tradition to develop ideas on the nature and function of secrecy as a fundamental quality of divine mystery? In responding to these questions in the chapters that follow, I show how early modern humanists draw on and transform different notions of secrecy from Western mysticism as they revive ancient patristic and medieval spiritual thought. I argue that, for early modern humanists, secrecy characterizes divine mystery as something that paradoxically transcends human rationality and discourse but also remains immanent in the world of human understanding, expression, and nature. Adopting this perspective allows us to view secrecy as occupying a central yet little-studied place in diverse areas of humanist inquiry, including theology, philosophy, and literature. Early modern humanists adapted mystical ideas on secrecy to organize, structure, and question the individual's hidden relation to the cosmos, the presence of the divine within human society and nature, and individual spiritual psychology. Through secrecy, early modern humanists question the relations between the metaphysical and the natural, the sacred and the profane.

This study focuses on three early modern Christian humanist figures who embed their spiritual thought and their ideas on secrecy in literature: Erasmus of Rotterdam (1456–1536), Guillaume Briçonnet (1472–1534), and Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549). These humanists explored different kinds of secrets pertaining to religion, politics, courtly love, and aesthetics. They expressed their thoughts on sacred and secular forms of secrecy in different modes of literary expression, ranging from the comic to the tragic and from the narrative to the performative. By analyzing how the Western mystical tradition nourished the Evangelical humanism of Erasmus, Briçonnet, and Marguerite, this work addresses lacunae in both medieval and early modern studies about the importance of secrecy for thinkers who explore theological truths in literary forms that lie outside the professionalized discourses of the universities. Although this study focuses on secrecy in early modernity, it presupposes that secrecy has been and will remain a reoccurring problem in different periods of

literary, philosophical, and religious history for reasons that are historically specific. Different authors conceptualize secrecy at different moments in history for reasons that are historically specific. Limited to early modernity, *Secrets* develops an intellectual-historical approach to the ways in which Erasmus and French reformers use literature as a space for exploring sacred and profane secrets.

I argue that two governing models for secrecy in Northern humanism emanate from Origenian, Augustinian, and pseudo-Dionysian sources. On the one hand, sin itself represents a form of secrecy, because the sins that motivate humans lie hidden not only from the awareness of others but from one's own awareness as well. Sin, in this way, leads to self-deception. On the other hand, there is also a divine dimension to secrecy, because God acts, as Augustine writes, from a secret "place" that is "more interior" than the tarnish of corruption that covers the soul's fallen but still potentially restorable purity of being.

Origenian Backgrounds

In the early sixteenth-century Renaissance, humanist literary, philosophical, and Evangelical thinkers translated, edited, and imitated works dealing with mysticism and secrecy that the Greek and Latin Church Fathers had written in Late Antiquity (approximately 200–700 CE) and the Middle Ages. For the first time in the history of Western philosophy, religion, and literature, works by the Christian Apostles and Church Fathers began to be systematically reedited and commented in new humanist translations, with new introductions and critical apparatuses that were intended to make those works pertinent to new publics and changing historical circumstances. Humanists produced these works to reinfuse Christian spiritual life with writings that predated the professionalized, academic theological discourses of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. In so doing, Renaissance humanists rearticulated and redefined questions about mysticism and secrecy that were central to apostolic and patristic thinkers.

The Northern humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) took an especially important and influential interest in translating and commenting on writings by the apostles and Church Fathers, for whom mysticism and secrecy play vital theological roles. He was particularly influenced by the works by Origen (185–254 CE).¹ By defining a set of questions pertaining to mysticism

1 Origen was the most important Church Father for Erasmus. The inspiration that Erasmus drew from Origen has been the subject of several important critical works. In particular, see

and secrecy in Origen's works, I examine how Erasmus inherited and responded to those problems. This investigation contributes to our understanding of the way Christian humanists redefined patristic and medieval formulations of mysticism and secrecy. I show that these patristic speculations about secrecy were important in diverse areas of early Christian humanist literary thought, as we see in Erasmus's writings on methodology, exegesis, and doctrine.

Secrecy for Origen and for the medieval mystical tradition that follows him relates to theories about hermeneutics and spiritual psychology. It relates, in other words, to ideas about the interpretation of sacred texts and to theories about the structure and functions of the human persona.² What happens when the human persona becomes transformed by reading Scripture? In the Middle Ages and in the sixteenth century, to speak about spiritual psychology means to speak about the passions in devotion and, hence, about the history of sacred rhetoric. Studying the human persona, or what we generally call the soul, is a matter of spiritual anthropology.³ Both Scripture and philosophy were sources for developing such theories, which could then be transposed into other domains of teaching, study, meditation, or literary production.

Origen was the first thinker to develop a philosophical hermeneutics of Saint Paul's tripartite division of the human persona (1 Thess. 5:23), and his theory remained a fundamental model for spiritual psychology and anthropology throughout the Middle Ages.⁴ Saint Paul did not theorize the human persona as consisting of spirit and flesh alone. In Thessalonians, Saint Paul

Jacques Chomarat, "Sur Érasme et Origène," in *Colloque érasmien de Liège: commémoration du 450^e anniversaire de la mort d'Érasme*, ed. Jean-Pierre Massaut (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1987), 87–113; André Godin, *Érasme lecteur d'Origène* (Geneva: Droz, 1982); Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959–64); Michael Screech, *Ecstasy and The Praise of Folly* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1980).

2 I use the term "human persona" in this chapter to refer to body, soul, and spirit together. In the following chapters, where these technical distinctions are not immediate concerns, "soul" is the general category designating human beings in their entirety.

3 I use the idea of "spiritual anthropology" to mean study of the structure of the soul.

4 "May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version*, ed. Michael D. Coogan et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 344. As von Ivanka has noted, Origen's interpretation of 1 Thess. 5:23 lies at the root of the Western mystical tradition's distinction between body, soul, and spirit. See Endre von Ivanka, *Plato christianus: la réception critique du platonisme chez les Pères de l'Église*, trans. Elisabeth Kessler (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), 308 ff. For the ancient, Pauline context see A. Marie Festugière, "La trichotomie de 1 Thess., v, 23, et la philosophie grecque," *Recherches de science religieuse* 20, no. 5 (1930): 385–415. This Pauline, threefold structure of the soul has not been

articulates a different view of man's soul, which certain thinkers such as Origen and Erasmus foregrounded, at certain times, over and against dualist conceptions of the human persona. They did so for reasons that were specific to their circumstances, but the question of how we come to know divine secrets remains structurally similar in each of these authors, because they base themselves on Thessalonians. Augustine's dualisms largely inform Luther's and Calvin's thought, while Origen's Christian philosophy—often a source for later heterodox mysticisms, in the works of Erasmus for instance—made him central to the tradition of Western mystical literature.

What was Origen's interpretation of Paul's three-part division of the human persona? Origen's theory of body, soul, and spirit relates to his Trinitarian theories, but he applies it also to cosmology, anthropology, and Biblical hermeneutics. He conceives of Christianity's universal principles in Stoic terms; there exists, he maintains, a hidden connection between the cosmos and the individual. He Christianizes Stoic ideas of the divine Word (*Logos*). Through this synthesis of Stoic and Christian cosmologies, he views God as being actively present throughout creation in the form of the *Logos*. Christ is presently at hand in creation in the form of invisible creative principles, or *logoi*. These *logoi* are the generative spiritual principles that cause beings to exist. Christ in this view is the intermediary between God and creation, and Christ as *Logos* represents the unity of the spiritual causal forces in the natural universe. God's relation to Christ is that of a mirror; he represents God perfectly, and this relationship also serves as the model for describing humankind. Man's faculty of reason (*logikos*) mirrors the divine *Logos*, just as Christ mirrors God. Origen writes,

For the *logos* that is in all beings capable of reason has the same relation to the *Logos* that is in the beginning with God, the God who is *Logos*, which God the Word has (without separation) to God. For just as the Father is truly God in relation to the image and images of the image, because men are not said to be images, but according to the image, so too is the *Logos* in relation to the *logos* that is in each rational being.⁵

the subject of extended scholarly studies either in the context of its ancient or early modern manifestations.

- 5 English translations of Origen are mine unless otherwise indicated, and they are based on the Latin edition by Rufinus that Erasmus used. I have consulted the translation in *Sources Chrétiennes* (abbreviated as sc), which also provides valuable critical notes to the texts. Brackets in my text refer to Scriptural citations noted in the relevant critical editions. "Ea enim ratio quae in singulis rationis capacibus inest, eamdem comparationem habet ad illam

For Origen, God relates to the divine *Logos* analogously to the way the human persona relates to its rational faculty. The human persona's rational faculty is an image of the divine *Logos*. Origen describes this parallelism through agricultural metaphors. God has, he says, metaphorically "sown" the "seeds" of reason into man's heart: "God rejoicing has sown his seed in the principle part of our heart" (*gaudens Deus sub principali cordis nostri sparget semen suum*).⁶ He interprets the Book of Jeremiah's agricultural imagery as signifying God's dissemination of Christ's heavenly seeds (*sancta semina*) into the soul, which thus represents the human persona's rational center (*hegemonikon*). Origen compares God spreading seeds to the way farmers fertilize fields in preparing them for renewal. For Origen, preachers assist God's act of sowing, because they metaphorically disseminate the Word into lands that have become deserted.⁷

Origen uses the terms *principale cordis* or *hegemonikon* to refer to God's hidden presence within the human persona. These terms refer to the idea that an element of the divine *Logos* resides in all created beings. The terms indicate the ruling aspect of the soul and, more generally, the idea that each being has a personal *logos* that mirrors the divine. This idea would become one of the most important and most contested in the history of Western mysticism. In the later Middle Ages, interpreters differed in their understandings of the *principale cordis*, viewing it as belonging to the human persona's intellectual capacities, to its affective capacities, or to both.⁸

rationem quae in principio apud Deum est, et Deus est Logos, quam habet Deus Logos, [id est ratio], sine articulo ad Deum illum [cum articulo]. Ut enim Pater autotheos, [hoc est, per se Deus, et verus Deus,] se habet ad imaginem, et ad imagines imagines, quam ob causam etiam dicuntur homines non esse imagines, sed ad imaginem, sic hunc in modum se habet idem Logos, [hoc est, ipsa ratio] ad eam, quae est in singulis, rationem." Origen, *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis*, ed. J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae* (Paris: Frères Garnier, 1857–1903), 14:263; SC 2:20, 221.

6 Origen, *In Jeremiam homilia*, ed. J.P. Migne, PG, 13:274.

7 Ibid., 314.

8 On this, see Jean Déchanet, "Amor ipse intellectus est. La doctrine de l'amour-intellection chez Guillaume de Saint-Thierry," *Revue du Moyen Âge latin* 1 (1945): 349–74; Francis Ruello, "La mystique de l'Exode (Exode 3, 14 selon Thomas Gallus, commentateur dionysien, † 1246)," in *Dieu et l'être. Exégèses d'Exode 3, 14 et de Coran 20, 11–24*, ed. Paul Vignaux (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978), 213–243; Alain de Libera, *La mystique rhénane. D'Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), 25–72; Bernard McGinn, "Love, Knowledge, and *Unio mystica* in the Western Christian Tradition," in *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, ed. Moshe Idel and McGinn Bernard (New York: Macmillan, 1989): 59–86. See also Marc Vial, *Jean Gerson. Théoricien de la théologie mystique* (Paris: Vrin, 2006).

Here in Origen's works, the *principale cordis* stands between the human and the divine; it marks the place where the divine *Logos* becomes seated within the soul. "Christ has such power," Origen writes, "that although he is invisible in his divinity, he is present to all men, and extends through the universe; which is declared by that statement: *among you stands one whom you do not know*."⁹ This invisible power, he writes, "... permeates the universe, so that all things which are always becoming, become through him: and it will always be true of the things in the universe, whichever one: 'all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.' [1 Jo. 3] and 'In wisdom hast thou made them all.'"¹⁰ The idea of the personal *logos* (*hegemonikon*) became known and translated throughout medieval mysticism as the *apex*, the *acies mentis*, or the *scintilla animae* ("little spark of the soul"). These terms remained fundamental to the later Western mystical tradition; they designate the seat of contemplative activity and knowledge within the human persona, whether that knowledge is interpreted as affective or speculative in nature.¹¹

Origen's division of body, soul, and spirit informs his ways of reading Scripture. In his interpretation of the term "living soul" that is used in Genesis 2:7,¹² Origen develops agricultural metaphors to explain how the Word is hidden or "sown" into all human souls and continues to shine there, always tending itself towards God:

Because the operation of the Father and the Son is in both saints and sinners, it is manifest that all beings who are rational participate in the Word of God—that is, in reason—and for this reason bear certain sown seeds of wisdom and justice—that is, Christ—in themselves. From He who truly is, who said through Moses: '*I am who am*, all things that exist draw participation [from me]; this participation in the Father God extends to

9 "Christus tantum virium habet, ut invisibili etiam sit divinitate sua, omni homini praesens, et per universum orbem extensus; quod declaratur per illud: 'In medio vestri stat illo, quem vos nescitis.' [Jo. 1:26]." Origen, *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis*, 251; SC 6:269, 188.

10 Cf. also: "Hic enim per universam orbis machinam permeat, ut quae semper fiunt, per ipsum fiant: et de universis, quaecunque protuleris, semper verum erit: 'Omnia per seipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil;' et illud: 'Omnia in sapientia fecisti.' [Psalm 104:24]" Origen, *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis*, 263; SC 6:269, 188.

11 On *hegemonikon* in late antique and medieval mysticism, see von Ivánka, *Plato christianus*, 308 ff. and especially Alain de Libera, *La mystique rhénane*, 250 ff.

12 "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 13. I discuss how French humanist Evangelical thinkers interpreted his idea further in Chapter 2.

all, just or sinful, rational and irrational beings and in absolutely all things that are. . . . Christ [according to Paul] is in the heart of all beings, as is the word or reason, which participation makes them rational beings. . . .¹³

For Origen, human nature participates in the Trinity through the *Logos*, and he draws a set of ethical consequences from that presupposition: through reason, the human persona can discern between carnal and spiritual things and can thus direct itself towards either one of those two moral and discursive poles. The rational soul secretly contains an image of the divine, enabling it to progress spiritually by rationally discerning between good and evil. Origen presents an ethical paradigm by dividing the human persona into body, soul, and spirit. Through its rational capacities, associated with the divine seeds sown into the soul, the human persona can distinguish between goods and evils, and it can order the relative spiritual values of worldly objects according to its own hierarchy of values, which allows it to move towards mystical unity with the divine *Logos*.

Origen's philosophical interpretation of Saint Paul's division of body, soul, and spirit transposes philosophical and exegetical ideas into the spheres of Christian cosmology and ethics. But how, more specifically, did Origen synthesize with ancient philosophy the anthropology that Saint Paul develops in Thessalonians? How did he, with Saint Augustine, help lay the groundwork for what the Middle Ages and sixteenth-century humanists understand as Christian philosophy?¹⁴ Origen theorizes pneumatology, or divine breath, arguing that the divine Spirit (*pneuma*) infuses the human spirit (*spiritus*) and unites the rational soul with the divine *Logos*. Such a union, he qualifies, has only been achieved by Christian saints, but he insists that, by virtue of human

13 "Quia autem operatio patris et filii et in sanctis et in peccatoribus sit, manifestatur ex eo quod omnes, qui rationabiles sunt, verbi dei, id est rationis, participes sunt et per hoc velut semina quaedam insita sibi gerunt sapientiae et iustitiae, quod sit Christus. Ex eo autem, qui vere est, qui dixit per Moysen: *Ego sum qui sum*, omnia quae sunt participum trahunt; quae participatio dei patris pervenit in omnes tam iustos quam peccatores et rationabiles atque irrationabiles et in omnia omnino quae sunt. . . . Ex quo in corde omnium esse significant Christum secundum id, quod verbum vel ratio est, cuius participio rationabiles sunt." Origen, *De principiis*, ed. J.P. Migne, *PG*, 11:153; *SC* 1:3, 5–6. For further discussion of the reference to Exodus 3:14 in Augustine and Marguerite de Navarre's works, see Chapter 3.

14 On the idea of Christian philosophy, see Étienne Gilson, *Introduction à la philosophie chrétienne* (Paris: Vrin, 1960); Dom Jean Leclercq, "Pour l'histoire de l'expression 'philosophie chrétienne,'" *Mélanges de science religieuse* 9 (1952): 221–226.

reason and its powers of discernment, the faithful can nonetheless strive towards such an infusion.¹⁵

This theory of grace applies to the domain of Biblical hermeneutics through the idea that the proper interpretation of Scripture depends on a gift from the Holy Spirit. In this view, Spirit unveils the “secret and hidden wisdom” (2 Cor. 7) in Scripture by revealing Christ’s “thought” (*sensus interior; nous*). Scripture’s “interior sense” corresponds and is indeed identical to Christ’s “mind.” The interpreter’s task is to properly discern its meaning to achieve union with His mind. This is central for Origen’s formulation of secrecy:

Is it therefore of importance to say how much need of intelligence there is in order to worthily interpret the word concealed in the clay treasures of ordinary speech, and especially when the letter is read by anyone at random, and who hears the word through sensible voice from all those who lend a corporeal ear? For he who shall apprehend accurately must be able to say truly: *We have the mind of Christ so that we can understand the gifts bestowed on us by God* [1 Cor. 16:12]¹⁶

Origen here draws on Saint Paul’s distinction between people who have what he calls the “mind of Christ” and those who are bound by flesh and thus incapable of being spiritually nourished by the divine Word. The interpreter attains the Christological meaning of Scripture through the union of his spirit with the Holy Spirit, which discloses the “mind” as contained in Scripture.

Origen uses Paul’s threefold division of the human persona to show how Holy Scripture’s different levels of meaning can be arranged according to body, soul, and spirit. This schema allows him to transfer secrecy as a problem of Scriptural interpretation into the field of ethics. Biblical interpretation consists of meditating on the “secret and hidden wisdom of God” in Scripture. Interpretation renders Scripture immediately pertinent to the daily life of the faithful. Origen bridges meditation and action by making hermeneutics immediately relevant to daily ethical life:

¹⁵ Cf. Origen, *De principiis*, 1, 3, 7; SC 157.

¹⁶ “Quid ergo attinet dicere quanta nobis opus sit mente ut in testaceis abjectae litterae thesauris reconditum verbum digne valeamus interpretari, praesertim cum littera passim a quibus vis legatur, verbumque per vocem sensibile audiatur ab omnibus qui auditum praebent corporalem? Qui enim accurate apprehensurus sit, vere is dicat oportet: Nos autem Christi sensum habemus, ut sciamus quae a Deo donata sunt nobis.” Origen, *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis*, 51; SC 1:4, 6.

Truly, as we began to say, the method that appears to us to be the correct one for understanding the Scriptures and seeking their meaning, we judge to be no less than the one that we are taught by Scripture itself, about how it should be understood. . . . Therefore it is proper to transcribe the understanding of divine Scripture three times in one's soul: that is, that the most simple are edified by, as I just said, the body of scriptures (which we thus call it the common and historical meaning); if those who have begun to progress and are able to contemplate something more, then they are edified by the soul of the Scriptures; those who truly are perfect and similar to those, about whom the Apostle says: *Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification.* Such ones as these are edified by the spiritual law, which has the shadow of future goods, as from the Spirit. Therefore just as man is said to be composed of body, soul, and spirit, so too is Holy Scripture, which was given for the salvation of men by divine generosity.¹⁷

Secrecy functions as a principle of metaphysical union between the divine and the worldly but also as a basis of moral perception and action. In this simultaneously exegetical and moral framework, the category of the body corresponds both to the letter of Scripture and to objects of empirical perception. The idea of the soul, in contrast, designates the sphere where moral discernment between the carnal and the spiritual becomes vital. In a separate but related

17 "Verum, ut dicere coeperamus, viam, quae nobis videtur recta esse ad intellegendas scripturas et sensum earum requirendum, huiusmodi esse arbitramur, sicut ab ipsa nihilominus scriptura, qualiter de ea sentiri debeat, edocemur. . . . Tripliciter ergo describere oportet in anima sua unumquemque divinarum intellegentiam litteram: id est, ut simpliciores quique aedificentur ab ipso, ut ita dixerim, corpore scripturarum (sic enim appellamus communem istum et historiam intellectum); si qui vero aliquantum iam proficere coeperunt et possunt amplius aliquid intueri, ab ipsa scripturae anima aedificentur; qui vero perfecti sunt et similes his, de quibus apostolus dicit: Sapientiam autem loquimur inter perfectos, sapientiam vero non huius saeculi neque principum huius saeculi, qui destruentur, sed loquimur dei sapientiam in mysterio absconditam, quam praeordinavit deus ante saecula in gloriam nostram, [1 Cor. 2:6–7], hi tales ab ipsa spiritali lege, quae umbram habet futurorum bonorum, tamquam ab spiritu aedificantur. Sicut ergo homo constare dicitur ex corpore et anima et spiritu, ita etiam sancta scriptura, quae ad hominum salutem divina largitione concessa est." Origen, *De principiis*, 363–66; SC 4:2, 4, 311. Cited in André Godin, *Erasmus lecteur d'Origène*. Cf. also Origen's *Hom. in Levit.*, 5:1.

category, the idea of the spirit corresponds to the presence of the *Logos* both in Scripture and as it can be perceived throughout creation.

As Origen presents it in his spiritual thought, secrecy belongs to Biblical hermeneutics, but it extends into ethics, where it functions to reform and rehabilitate the human persona. Like Scripture, the soul embodies a principle of metaphysical union that can be unveiled. The soul's imminent resources see themselves reflected in Scripture. Origen's interpretation of Genesis 24:12–36 occupies a central place in his ideas about spiritual renovation. He interprets the images of wellsprings as metaphors for the spiritual presence of the Word both in Scripture and the human soul. The wells that Isaac dug, which the Philistines fill and refill (Genesis 24:12–26), represent the divine mysteries of the “living Word.” Their sources can be directly attained through Scripture and can renovate the Christian if his or her “perceptions” are properly purified through right action:

For when God made man in the beginning, ‘he made him according to his own image and likeness,’ and he did not place this image on the outside, but within him. This image could not be seen in you as long as your house was dirty with filth and filled with rubbish. That spring of knowledge was lying within you, but it could not flow because the Philistines had filled it with earth and had made in it ‘the image of the earthly.’ But you bore indeed at that time ‘the image of the earthly,’ but now since these things have been heard, having been cleansed from that whole earthly mass and weight by the Word of God, make the ‘image of the heavenly’ shine brightly in you.¹⁸

Origen conceives of meditating on Scriptural metaphor as the cultivation of an internal mode of vision. This vision beholds the divine image in the human persona. The “pure water” refers to the presence of Evangelical truths that are at once hidden but also plainly visible in the Old Testament for those who are capable of right interpretation and right action. The Philistines represent the limitations of interpreting Scripture in its literal sense and the human persona's limits in the absence of divine Spirit. In Origen's view, divine mysteries purify the human image, restoring its semblance to the divine image:

If...you hearing these words today should faithfully perceive what is said, Isaac would work also in you, he would cleanse your hearts from

18 Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 193; *SC* 12:4.

earthly perceptions. And seeing these mysteries which are so great to be lying hidden in the divine Scriptures, you progress in understanding, you progress in spiritual perceptions. You yourselves will also begin to be teachers, and 'rivers of living water' will proceed from you. For the word of God is present and this now is his work, that he might remove the earth from the soul of each of you and open your spring. For he is within you and does not come from without, just as 'also the kingdom of God is within you.'¹⁹

Spiritual interpretation aims at Christ's presence within Scripture. The human persona's highest faculties, reason and spirit (*nous* and *mens*), serve to meditate and contemplate on Scriptural mystery, and in so doing, they become transformed in conformity to the Word. By virtue of this union, the human soul becomes able to express the Word through history. It has done so, in this perspective, through prophets and apostles but also through individual believers.

In Christianizing Stoic theories, Origen aligns universal *Logos* and human reason, and he establishes continuity between divine and human speech. This allows him to suggest that disseminating the Gospel—its language and its meaning—represents a continual moral resource for spiritual renovation by offering direct contemplation on Scriptural mystery. For these reasons, Erasmus and French reformers, as I show in subsequent chapters, made extensive use of Origen's distinction between body, soul, and spirit, which became a central element in their theological and literary thought.

Augustinian Backgrounds

Augustine's thoughts on secrecy are important for medieval and early modern philosophy and literature as well. Augustine's *Confessions* sheds light on Marguerite's devotional poetry.²⁰ Secrecy occupies a vital yet little-studied place in Augustine's spiritual thought. For Augustine, the problem of secrecy relates to how the hidden, divine principle (*abditum mentis*) in the human soul can surge forth into awareness.²¹ In Book 9 of the *Confessions*, Augustine

19 Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, 192.

20 For an insightful discussion of Augustine and Marguerite de Navarre's devotional poetry, see Robert D. Cottrell, *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986).

21 On Augustine's understanding of secrecy as the hidden recesses of the mind (*abditum mentis*) and its importance for the medieval philosophical and mystical traditions, see

narrates his spiritual death and rebirth, and he describes how the secret, divine recesses of the human soul surge forth, bringing human will into alignment with divine will. Augustine asks,

But who am I, what am I? Is there any evil I have not committed in my deeds, or if not in deeds, then in my words, or if not in words, at least by willing it? But you, Lord, are good and merciful, and your right hand plumbed the depths of my death, draining the cesspit of corruption in my heart, so that I ceased to will all that I had been wont to will, and now willed what you willed. But where had my power of free decision been throughout those long, weary years, and from what depth, what hidden profundity, was it called forth in a moment, enabling me to bow my neck to your benign yoke and my shoulders to your light burden, O Christ Jesus, my helper and my redeemer.²²

Augustine recounts how, after “long years” of suffering from his corrupt will, God “sounded” his soul’s sinful depths and his state of spiritual death (*profunditatem mortis meae*). God purges the soul’s abyss of corruption (*abyssum corruptionis*) and restores it “in a moment” (*subito*) by acting in and through the soul’s immanent and hidden divine principle. This reveals the soul’s latent potential to act in accordance with divine will. Augustine uses metaphors of

Alain de Libera, *La mystique rhénane*, 44–46. De Libera writes that “La fonction de l’*abditum mentis* est d’être principe constitutif de la pensée ou *cogitatio*: en tant que dépôt secret des ‘raisons vraies’, le *fonds* secret de l’âme est aussi le *fond* ou le *fondement* de la pensée. C’est le siège d’un savoir qui, en lui-même, reste impensé . . .” For the tradition leading from Eckhart through Suso and Tauler, see Alain de Libera, *Eckhart, Suso, Tauler et la divinisation de l’homme* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993), 77 ff. For a list of passages on secrecy in Augustine’s *Confessions*, see J.J. O’Donnell’s commentaries in Augustine, *Confessions*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); in particular, see *Conf.* 1.4.4 (On God’s hidden yet present nature); 3.1.1 (on the soul’s indigence when separated from God); 4.12.19 (on Christ’s incarnation and passion as a descent from and ascent to a state of divinity and on Christ as both present and absent in the world); 5.6.11 (on God’s secret providence); 5.11.21 (on secret doctrines); 6.3.4 (on God’s ‘most hidden yet intimately present’ nature and his simultaneous absence and presence in the world); 8.2.4 (on intimate conversation with friends); 8.8.19 (on the heart as secret dwelling); 9.1.1 (on God’s secret presence in the soul); 10.42.67 (on God’s secret decree and Christ as Mediator); 11.41.41 (on the the hidden mystery of God’s eternity hidden in the secret nature of his being).

22 Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. O.S.A. John E. Rotelle, trans. O.S.B. Maria Boulding (New York: New City Press, 1997), 209.

exiting and entering to describe how God's will enters the soul and purges its corrupted will, driving out profane desires as the spirit of grace inhabits him:

... You [Lord] cast them [my profane desires] out and entered yourself to take their place, you who are lovelier than any pleasure, though not to flesh and blood, more lustrous than any light, yet more inward than is any secret intimacy, loftier than all honor, yet not to those who look for loftiness in themselves. My mind was free at last from the gnawing need to seek advancement and riches, to welter in filth and scratch my itching lust.²³

In this passage, Augustine establishes an opposition between the secrecy, or separateness, of the inner man and the pursuit of external, worldly goods. Specifically, Augustine opposes the grace that surges forth within the soul's hidden depths to the search for worldly honors, profits, and pleasures. As I will show, this opposition has an important place in both Erasmus's and Briçonnet's works and in their Evangelical critiques of the Roman Church. The opposition also plays a fundamental part of Marguerite's aesthetic thought, and it is evident in the *Heptameron*. For Augustine, God brings about this sudden conversion away from worldly values by acting on and through the hidden, concealed depths of man's corruption (*abyssum corruptionis*).

Paradoxically, there are two kinds of secrecy set forth in this Augustinian model. On the one hand, sin itself represents a form of secrecy, because the sins that motivate human drives lie hidden not only from the awareness of others but also from one's own awareness. Sin leads to self-deception about the nature of one's own motives. On the other hand, there is a divine dimension to secrecy as well, because God acts from a secret "place" that is "more interior" than the moral tarnish covering the soul's fallen but still potentially restorable dignity. Grace, in this view, acts secretly to remain separate from the profane orders of human life. God's grace emerges from beyond the depths of human awareness, and it comes to inhabit the soul by replacing carnal desires with divine will, but it does so from a place within the human persona that remains divine and separate from the profane world. This place is where God is at once immanent and transcendent in the sense that He remains separate from the world's fallen condition.

23 Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, 209. Although this frequently cited passage is one of Augustine's best known, the connection he makes here between secrecy and the (Ciceronian) critique of honors, profits, and pleasures has not to my knowledge previously been noted or explored.

In Augustine's *Confessions*, there is a governing tension between secrecy and openness that would become fundamental to humanist Evangelical thinkers during the early Renaissance. Within this tension, a number of questions arise: How can human and divine wills be reconciled? How can an infinite God act in and through the world of finite creation? How does inner life relate to the pursuit of worldly goods? Augustine responds to these problems by developing the idea that God occupies a simultaneously transcendent and immanent status.

To see this idea more clearly, we can consider the force of Book 11 in the *Confessions*, where Augustine reflects on time and eternity, the finite and the infinite. In that book, Augustine expresses his desire to understand God's law, to bring his will into conformity with divine justice.²⁴ Augustine contrasts the carnal, profane desires that have governed his corrupted life with the "hidden wonders" of God's law as it is disclosed in the writings of Scripture. The meaning of Scripture, Augustine writes, lies "deep in shadow, obscure in their secrets." But he discovers that his longings do not relate to any worldly thing or creature. This longing, he realizes, directs him towards something that transcends the finite world, towards God. He realizes that his longings do not pertain to any finite, worldly objects and cannot be satisfied by profane honors, profits, or pleasures. Augustine writes that such a desire remains detached from the search for honors, profits, and pleasures:

Have mercy on me, Lord, and hearken to my longing; for I do not think it arises from this earth, or concerns itself with gold or silver or precious stones, with splendid raiment or honors or positions of power, with the pleasures of the flesh or with things we need for the body and for this our life of pilgrimage; for all these things are provided for those who seek your kingdom and your righteousness.²⁵

In a poetic prayer, we see that Augustine's conversion depends on recognizing that his deepest desires and motives for acting do not relate to any worldly, temporal goods. In the profane world, he writes, people search for honor, profit,

24 On the history of will in antiquity, see Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). On the problem of free will in Erasmus and Luther, see Georges Chantraine, *Erasme et Luther. Libre et serf arbitre. Étude historique et théologique* (Paris; Namur: Éditions Lethielleux; Presses Universitaires de Namur, 1981).

25 Augustine, *The Confessions*, 286–87.

and pleasure, but they are unaware of the desires motivating them to do so.²⁶ These desires “spring” from a mysterious source within the self but become misdirected. Aware of this, he begins to long to understand Scripture’s “inner meaning” as a matter not only of exegesis but also of moral and spiritual life. He begins to beg that God see and hear his longing and that the mysteries of God’s laws and writings become “opened.” He recognizes that he must beg God for grace through the intermediary of Christ, in whom, he writes, “are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Those treasures cannot be found in the world but only in the books of Christian wisdom, which describe Christ as the Son of God.²⁷

Medieval and Humanist Backgrounds

In the medieval Latin allegorical tradition and, more specifically, in pseudo-Dionysius’s translated works (which I discuss at greater length in Chapter 2), the metaphor of the cover or veil (*velamen*, or *integumentum*) refers to the way human language both hides and discloses the secrets of divine mystery. In this now well-studied medieval allegorical tradition, the relation between secrecy and literary language remains to be further explored and becomes articulated in part through the metaphor of the veil (*velamen*, *involucrum*). The veil implies a governing tension between secrecy and openness. Veils protect the operations of divine charity in the profane world, maintaining them as separate from earthly corruption.

But as work by Peter Dronke and Peter von Moos has shown, pseudo-Dionysius’s understanding of language as a cover or veil belongs to a broader tradition of medieval thought about the place of literary language in theology.²⁸ We

26 The critique of pursuing honors, profits, and pleasures extends back to classical antiquity; see, among other passages, Cicero’s *Laelius* 6.22; *On Duties* 1.115 and 3.24; *Tusculan Disputations* 4.31. See also Saint Augustine, *Sermons on the Saints*, ed. O.S.A. John E. Rotelle, trans. O.P. Edmund Hill, 208, and Augustine’s *The Trinity*, ed. O.S.A. John E. Rotelle, 278.

27 Augustine, *The Confessions*, 286–87.

28 Peter Dronke, *Fabula: Explorations Into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism* (Leiden, Köln: Brill, 1974); Peter von Moos, “Literary Aesthetics in the Latin Middle Ages,” in *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 1100–1540. Essays in Honour of John O. Ward*, ed. Constant J. Mews, Cary J. Nederman, and Ron M. Thomson (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 81–97. In this work, von Moos argues that eleventh- and twelfth-century authors such as Bernard of Sylvestris, William of Conches, Alain de Lille, and Abelard formulated doctrines of rhetorical tropes—and, in particular, of *transumptio* and *integumentum*—that shaped later medieval aesthetic debate about the value of literature for conveying

can therefore conceive of secrecy differently here, outside its Origenian, Augustinian, and pseudo-Dionysian aspects. Von Moos in particular shows how the alliance between literature and mystery becomes forged for the first time in patristic and twelfth-century writings and how it influenced fourteenth-century theories of fiction, notably Boccaccio's work titled *On the Genealogy of the Gods of the Gentiles* (1350–1374). Von Moos argues that, beginning in the twelfth century, the alliance between rhetoric and dialectic helped to develop theories of linguistic transference, or *transumptio*, that revalued rhetoric as an instrument for devotion over and against scholastically defined, professionalized grammar or dialectic. In so doing, twelfth-century thinkers attributed an important role to literary aesthetics for communicating theological truths, particularly the idea of the cover.

The humanist thinkers I deal with approach secrecy from different philosophical, religious, and literary perspectives—different, that is, both from the Middle Ages and from one another. Whereas pseudo-Dionysius remained important for the French Catholic and poetic tradition through the later sixteenth century, Erasmus worked with Socratic dialectic as a form of secrecy and veiling. He combined these with Christian (apostolic, patristic) interpretations of the Platonic tradition, leading him in different directions than what one finds in medieval and Renaissance mysticism. Nonetheless, medieval theories of metaphor (*transumptio* and *integumentum*) provide an important background for late medieval and Renaissance theories of fictional language as a veil for divine secrets. Secrecy lies at the center of the idea of the *integumentum*, extending from Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* through Macrobius and into the Middle Ages through the *Roman de la Rose*, then in Clément Marot's translation of this last text.

As Carol Thyself has discussed in her work on Marguerite de Navarre, in his *Genealogia deorum*, Boccaccio draws on Macrobius's terms for the cover (*tectum*) as veil to refer to profane fables and literature as veils of truth.²⁹ This tradition, which runs through Lombard's *Sentences*, Dante, Augustine,

theological truths. Von Moos shows how Augustine relates *involutrum* with *aenigma* and *mysterium*; in this perspective, Christ crucified was an *involutrum*, as are the parables of the sower, wheat, and chaff and other enigmatic passages of Scripture. Abelard follows Augustine in understanding the secrets of the Bible as covered and thus protected but also spoken obscurely to invite understanding, on the principle that what resists understanding seduces interest. On the model proposed by Macrobius, literary invention was revived as a means of investigating divine secrets.

29 On this, see Carol Thyself's important work, *The Pleasure of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Lactantius, and others into seventeenth-century England, France, and Italy, shows that secrecy occupies a central place in the classical, medieval, and early modern traditions of theology and aesthetic thought. In the Neoplatonic tradition beginning with Macrobius's ideas on "covering" (*integumentum*), the cover protects but also discloses divine secrets in cryptic ways, requiring allegorical interpretation to decipher them.

Humanist Backgrounds

Chapter 1 studies the importance of mysticism and secrecy in Erasmus of Rotterdam's (1466–1536) spiritual thought. The chapter establishes a common ground between ancient and Northern humanist reflections on secrecy. Erasmus had long-standing ties with French humanists, which dissolved when French reformers in Marguerite de Navarre's circle accused him of heresy.³⁰ Nonetheless, despite the differences between Erasmus and French reformers, I show that Erasmus's works share a common approach and purpose with French humanist thought. In Chapter 1, I focus on the way that Erasmus revived Origen's (185–254 CE) ideas on secrecy and integrated them into his reform initiatives.

Although none of the French reformers that I discuss were properly speaking Erasmian, Erasmus's literary thought shares certain characteristics with that of Lefèvre d'Étaples, Guillaume Briçonnet, and Marguerite de Navarre. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, I show how Erasmus's theories of the human persona relate to those developed by French reformers. In Erasmus's thought and that of early French reformers, secrecy describes God's divine immanence and transcendence. God remains secret because He is both in and separate from the world of profane pleasures, profits, and honors. Through proper devotion and asceticism, he argues, the human persona accedes to divine mystery through its threefold structure, specifically through the spirit. This originally Origenian threefold structure can be found in almost all the texts that I discuss. Studying secrecy in Erasmus's thought sheds light on the spiritual and anthropological models that he shares with his patristic predecessors and with his contemporary French Renaissance humanists.

By studying secrecy in relation to spiritual psychology, one finds important connections between Erasmus's texts and French humanist prose and poetic

30 See Guy Bedouelle, "Introduction to the *Apologia ad Fabrum*," in *Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem*, ed. Guy Bedouelle (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), i–xxvii.

works. Erasmus's life as a humanist reformer developed with and through those of his French contemporaries. His lack of communication with Marguerite suggests that political and religious differences divided them. Nonetheless, that silence should not prevent us from viewing Erasmus's spiritual reforms as bearing similarities to the theologies and literature developed by early French humanists.

Chapter 2 examines the early humanist Evangelical movement in France in terms of mysticism and secrecy, focusing on the French Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet (1470–1534) and his spiritual correspondence (1521–1524) with Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549). Although scholars have studied Marguerite's spiritual correspondence with Briçonnet, this study moves beyond the scope of those scholarly works by both broadening and focusing the intellectual-historical perspectives on their relations. It enlarges this scope by studying secrecy as a central element in humanist mysticism and aesthetics.

Studying secrecy in Briçonnet's and Marguerite's correspondence from this broader philosophical, spiritual, and literary perspective reveals how French reformers invoked ancient and medieval mystical philosophies—and perhaps most notably, pseudo-Dionysian philosophy—that center on problems of secrecy, transcendence, and immanence. Like Erasmus, French humanist thinkers developed their reform ideologies by renewing Greek and Latin patristic notions of secrecy, but they used those sources in markedly different ways. By studying secrecy in the works of Origen, Augustine, and pseudo-Dionysius, I establish an intellectual-historical background for discussing how Bishop Briçonnet and his group of reformers, known as the Group of Meaux, and later Marguerite de Navarre, revived ancient and medieval problems of secrecy to foster spiritual renewal.

Chapter 3 studies Augustinian and pseudo-Dionysian secrecy in Marguerite de Navarre's (1492–1549) devotional poetry, exploring how ancient and mystical theories concerning the experience of divine mystery inform her devotional works. In this chapter, I examine secrecy as a theme and a problem that crosses the boundaries of religious, courtly, and erotic literature in Marguerite's works. I argue that viewing her works from the point of view of secrecy provides insight into her poetic innovations in humanist Evangelical spirituality and aesthetics. I show how Marguerite adapts humanist and mystical theories of the soul (or, more aptly, their spiritual anthropologies) to her particular style of Christian humanism. Secrecy appears centrally in Marguerite's major humanist and devotional poems, notably the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* (*Miroir de l'ame pecheresse*, 1533) and *The Prisons* (*Les Prisons*, 1547).

Marguerite's devotional poems draw on the theme of secrecy transmitted through ancient, medieval, and early modern sources (Aristotle, Cicero,

Augustine, Marguerite Porete, Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Castiglione), which she unites under the sign of Christian charity. By reading Marguerite's poems in light of secrecy as a long-standing devotional problem, this chapter provides an intellectual-historical background for understanding the function of classical, patristic, and medieval ideas on secrecy in her works.

Chapter 4 relates the humanist, mystical, and Evangelical elements in Marguerite's devotional poems to secrecy in the *Heptameron's* short stories, or *nouvelles*, by focusing on a governing tension between secrecy and news in selected stories. The *Heptameron* represents Evangelical devotion from different perspectives. By investigating this governing tension, this fourth chapter examines Marguerite's literary exploration of secrecy and how her narratives bring together elements of the sacred and the profane.

In particular, Chapter 4 argues that the *Heptameron* explores secrecy in the world of pleasures, profits, and honors, which her Christian humanist predecessors condemned. Augustinian mystical secrecy as a spiritual principle relating to the soul's divine but latent dignity stands opposed to the pursuit of worldly honors, profits, and pleasures. In the *Heptameron*, Marguerite shifts away from the spiritual anthropologies of her predecessors, but she nonetheless continues to portray their points of view. The *Heptameron's* stories confront sacred and profane secrets by exploring devotional and worldly desires as well as the ethical problems to which they give rise.

I have selected these texts because they represent central moments in the radical transformation that Christian devotion underwent from the end of the Middle Ages until the Protestant Reformation. The period prior to the Reformation represents a moment of mystical effervescence in Western Europe, when humanists explored and attempted to unite many philosophical and religious systems around principles of secrecy. Studying secrecy through this early modern literature, philosophy, and spirituality furthers our understanding of the functions of secrecy and mysticism in Christian humanism. It also advances our understanding of Christian humanism itself, both in its early modern origins and its later growth.

Secrets between Philosophy, Biblical Interpretation, and Literature: Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466/9–1536)

Secrecy in Erasmian Anthropology

How can we approach the issue of secrecy in Erasmus's works? One way is to look at how Erasmus develops his thought by drawing on Origen's method and spiritual doctrines. Erasmus adapts Origen's ideas of secrecy and uses them in diverse areas of his thought, notably in the domains of anthropology, theology, and ethics.¹ Origen theorized secrecy through his threefold philosophical understanding of the human persona's structure. Throughout his early and late works, Erasmus adapts Origen's division of body, soul, and spirit. For instance, between the years 1501 and 1504, while writing his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, he relies extensively on Saint Paul's and Origen's threefold division of the human persona. He uses it to respond to John Colet in their dispute about the nature of Christ's sacrifice, a dispute that took place in 1499, but that was published in 1503/4. In the domain of ethics, he integrates it into his *Enchiridion* (1503), while in his literary works—such as *The Praise of Folly* (1511) and his *Adages* (in "Sileni Alcibiadis" of 1515, for instance)—he uses Origen to develop a philosophical dimension in Christianity. He deals with the same group of issues in his *Apology Against Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples* (1517), which addresses the tension between Christ's humanity and divinity and where he questions whether Christ's fear in Gethsemane detracted from his dignity as a God.² In his *Paraphrases on Romans* (1517) and in his later *Expositions on the*

1 For Erasmus's use of this Pauline division in his political thought, see David Marsh, "Erasmus on the Antithesis of Body and Soul," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 4 (1976): 673–688.

2 On the relations between Lefèvre and Erasmus, see Bedouelle, "Introduction to the *Apologia ad fabrum*," in *Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem*, ed. Guy Bedouelle (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), i–xxvii. In his *Quincuplex psalterium* (1509 and 1513) and in his *Commentary on the Epistles of Saint Paul* (1512), Lefèvre d'Étaples insisted that Hebrews 2:7 should not read "Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis" but rather "Minuisti eum paulo minus a Deo." In Lefèvre's view, Christ was made less than God but not less than angels. Lefèvre considered that such a claim diminished Christ's divinity, and, insisting on the unity of Christ's nature, he rejected the view that this abasement occurred only with respect to his human nature. In his *Novum Instrumentum* (1516), Erasmus criticized Lefèvre's interpretation of Hebrews 2:7, which cites Psalm 8:6. In response, Lefèvre included a critical response to

Psalms (1528–1531), Erasmus further uses Origen's theory of the human persona, which represents one of the most important philosophical and religious ideas in the history of Western mysticism. While André Godin and Michael J. Heath have discussed Erasmus's use of Origen's threefold structure, the extent to which he develops it and the variety of different uses to which he puts it remain to be explored.

Scholars have shown that between 1501 and 1504, Erasmus steeped himself in the study and translation of numerous Church Fathers, and he had a particular interest in patristic exegesis on Saint Paul. We know that by that time, he had read pseudo-Dionysius, Origen, Cyprien, Ambrose, and Jerome in Italy. Together with humanists such as the earlier Lorenzo Valla (1406–1457) and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (c. 1450–1536), Erasmus worked to rehabilitate Saint Paul as an Apostle of central importance during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.³ Whereas Lefèvre interpreted the Apostle's works largely in the light of Aristotelian and pseudo-Dionysian thought, and whereas Luther interpreted them in terms of the dualism between flesh and spirit, Erasmus emphasized Paul's and Origen's spiritual anthropology, which he discovered in Origen's *Commentaries on Romans*.⁴ Origen interpreted Saint Paul's threefold Christian anthropology in ways that allowed Erasmus to shift his focus away from the dualism of flesh and spirit in Romans and its later interpreters.

Christ's Fear in Gethsemane

In his earliest work dealing with Christology, Erasmus approaches the significance of Christ's sacrifice by modifying Saint Paul's and Origen's threefold

Erasmus in the second edition of his commentaries (1515, published 1516). Erasmus then wrote the *Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem* (1517), which centers on debating Christ's humanity and abasement. He argues that Christ was abased lower than the Father only. Lefèvre went so far to say that Erasmus's reading was "heretical and most unworthy of Christ and God . . . contrary to the spirit and adhering to the letter which destroys." Cited in Bedouelle, "Introduction," xix.

- 3 Erasmus abandoned his commentary on *Romans* in 1501. In 1504, he found Valla's annotations on the New Testament and had them published in Paris in 1505. Inspired partly by both John Colet and Lorenzo Valla's work, Erasmus translated the New Testament from Greek into Latin in 1506. He published the first edition of his Greek New Testament (*Novum Instrumentum*) in 1516 with a Latin translation. The *Novum Instrumentum* was prefaced by his well-known text titled the "Paraclesis."
- 4 On the influence of Origen's Pauline commentaries on Erasmus, see Thomas P. Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

definition of the human persona.⁵ The debate spans numerous topics, including the status of natural instinct (fear of death), martyrology and charity (alacrity), the dynamic between human emotions, and Christ's visionary power to imagine and foresee death. But one of the most fundamental questions in Erasmus's debate with Colet, and later Lefèvre, is whether the idea that Christ truly feared death as a mortal in Gethsemane decreases the significance of his sacrifice. Does fear in Christ also necessarily imply the presence of sinfulness? Can we attribute human fear and thus sin to a God?⁶ Erasmus begins by justifying his use of the threefold (spirit, soul, body) definition of man:

Do not protest, my dear Colet, that I have invented this division of humanity into three parts, spirit, flesh, and soul; I am following Jerome's lead. Jerome followed Origen, and Origen Paul. Paul, of course, followed the Holy Spirit. But in using this division I am giving Christ only spirit and soul, with no part that is flesh. Some theologians call flesh what I here call soul, the part in which we must assume Christ feared death, as did Peter. . . . This natural weakness, so deeply implanted in human nature that it can be conquered but never eradicated, is the surest evidence of humanity, and the redeemer not only took it upon himself, but did so in a remarkable way. I would in fact venture to say of Christ what Augustine said of Peter, 'Unwillingly he came to death, but willingly he conquered

5 After a visit to England in 1499, where he engaged in a debate about Christ's humanity with the English humanist John Colet (1467–1519), Erasmus, after leaving England, continued to write to Colet about his views on Christ's suffering, and he eventually published their debate. In 1503/4, Erasmus revised the debate under the title "Disputatiuncula de taedio, pavore, tristitia Iesu" (1499). This work rearticulates the questions and arguments of their exchanges from 1499 onward. It makes extensive use of the Church Fathers, particularly their theories of mental representation. In 1509, Erasmus published the "Disputatiuncula," which, as scholars have noted, presented his first study in Scriptural exegesis (it was originally written in 1504 but began in conversation in 1499). The text records his debate with John Colet about Christ's passion and suffering. Erasmus returned to these questions in 1509 with Lefèvre d'Étaples. See Desiderius Erasmus, "Disputatiuncula de taedio, pavore, tristitia Iesu," in *Spiritualia and Pastoralia*, ed. Michael J. Heath (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 1–68. On Erasmus's Christology, see Heath's introduction to the "Disputatiuncula" in *Spiritualia and Pastoralia*, i–xxxi, and G.J. Fokke, "An aspect of the Christology of Erasmus of Rotterdam," *Epemerides theologicae lovaniensis* 54 (1978): 161–187.

6 They debate Christ's humanity and the meaning of his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, particularly the words "My father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 50 (Matthew 26:39; cf. Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). The question at stake is whether this utterance shows that Christ truly dreaded the prospect of death like a true mortal.

it.' That he shrank from death was a sign of weakness, natural but not sinful.⁷

Erasmus uses Origen's threefold division of the human persona as an interpretive strategy to articulate his ideas and argument about the nature of Christ's humanity. He argues that, in Gethsemane, Christ did not want to sacrifice himself from the point of view of his soul. Nonetheless, from the point of view of the spirit, he acted in unison with divine will. Using Saint Paul's and Origen's threefold division of the human persona enables Erasmus to argue that Christ's sacrifice represented, from the point of view of his "body" and "soul," a total separation from the Godhead. Christ, in other words, became truly incarnate in flesh and soul, but without sinfulness. For Erasmus, Christ's sacrifice has meaning for humanity because of this radical separation between His human and divine natures.⁸ Here we have an early, indeed perhaps the earliest, elaboration of what is ostensibly the most important foundation of Erasmus's moral thought, which he rearticulates throughout his later works. He extends his spiritual psychology into his famous work, the *Enchiridion*, which I discuss below.⁹

Erasmus further draws on Saint Paul's and Origen's threefold division of the human persona to refute Colet's claim that Erasmus imputes sin to Christ. Although he attributes fear to Christ, this does not, he contends, imply that he is attributing sin to Christ. Erasmus argues that, although ancient philosophers customarily explain inner conflict as a tension between two conflicting impulses of the soul,¹⁰ these impulses are in fact manifestations of human will.¹¹ Erasmus fuses the idea of impulse and will. In addition, there exists, according to him, a third category of volition, which he calls "natural instinct" and which is also a manifestation of the will. Yet, although these natural instincts are forms of will, they

7 Desiderius Erasmus, "Disputatiuncula," 61.

8 In the "Disputatiuncula," Erasmus qualifies this position by conceding that Christ was perhaps willing to die in his spirit but that in his body and soul, Christ resisted God's will and experienced fear of death. He maintains that the meaning of Christ's sacrifice, on the contrary, is diminished by the idea that Christ gave himself as an entirely willing sacrificial victim. Where would the meaning of the sacrifice be if Christ had experienced no human passion towards the experience of death? By adopting this stance, Erasmus puts forward the radical, paradoxical view that, in his soul, Christ did not want to die or to sacrifice himself for humanity. That is what made his death a genuine sacrifice, in Erasmus's view.

9 Cf. Heath, "Introductory Note to the *Disputatiuncula*," 4.

10 "...the one...brutish and inclined towards evil; the other...called reason by the philosophers..." Erasmus, "Disputatiuncula," 59.

11 "...any inclination towards something is to some extent an act of the will..." Ibid., 60.

are “the will of nature, not of the spirit or the flesh.”¹² Whereas impulses direct us towards good or bad things, natural instinct is neutral: it inclines us towards neither good nor evil. Erasmus interprets instincts in light of the threefold vision of man presented in 1 Thessalonians, and he explains the relation among these three categories of impulse as follows:

The first belongs to the spirit and impels us purely towards the invisible, the good, and the eternal; the second belongs to the flesh and does the opposite, tempting us towards evil simply because it is evil. For a certain inclination towards wickedness has been left in our flesh, and it means that, even when the effort and the rewards involved are equal, we find more pleasure in doing evil than good. The third kind of impulse is midway between these two, attracted neither towards good for its own sake, nor towards evil for its own sake, but instead towards anything that is favorable to nature; and it recoils from anything that threatens our survival, or even our peace of mind. The first of these impulses derives from judgement and grace, the second from corruption, the third from natural instinct.¹³

Erasmus here fuses the Stoic ethical doctrine of “indifferents,” or *adiaphora*, with Paul’s distinction of body, soul, and spirit. According to this Stoic doctrine, the values of “good” and “bad” apply only to internal states of being and not to outward, i.e., external, circumstances. This corresponds to the Stoic idea that one can become indifferent to changes that fortune may bring. Goodness, in this view, consists in properly ordering the soul’s various parts into harmony. Moral virtue does not depend on external things because they are, in this light, merely “indifferent” to one’s well being. These indifferents only acquire a negative or positive value to the extent that they are used for a negative or positive end.¹⁴ These elements allow Erasmus to articulate a careful study of

¹² Ibid., 59–61.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The bibliography on indifferents is extensive. For the Classical backgrounds, see Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Erasmus’s tripartite theory of man and Christ and his use of the theory of indifferents also appear in the *Enchiridion*, the “Sileni Alcibiadis,” and in his *The Praise of Folly*. Screech writes, “The greatest Renaissance exponents of this theology of ‘indifference’ based on St Paul are Erasmus and Rabelais. (The *Tiers Livre de Pantagruel* makes it into the standard of wise Christian conduct.) But Erasmus, much more than Rabelais, encourages the wise Christian to spiritualise the *adiaphora*, drawing them away from the body towards the spirit and judging them not by the momentary standards of a fleeting

Christ's psychology in Gethsemane in terms of Stoic theories of mental representation and affect, and they show how he moves from anthropological and exegetical domains into the sphere of ethics by syncretizing Saint Paul's three-fold division of the human persona, on the one hand, and the Stoic theory of indifferents, on the other.

In his preface to the Greek edition of the New Testament (1518), entitled the *Ratio verae theologiae*, Erasmus argues that Scripture contains the divine *Logos* and that this presence of the divine within Scripture gives it a renovating power. As he explains Scripture's transformative power and its accessibility to all Christians, he extends and develops the metaphorical imagery surrounding the wellsprings and sources that, as I discussed in the Introduction, Origen interprets. Recalling the passages from Origen discussed earlier, Erasmus writes,

That famous wiseman gives good advice, who says: 'You should drink the water from your own cistern.' And thus it would not be necessary to seek something elsewhere but you might rather give out to others from your own wellspring. Consequently when you have given up on these confused formularies and the muddy puddles of the summaries, then make your heart itself into a library of Christ. From it, like the provident householder, you can bring forth 'new things and old' as they should be needed. For these things which come forth from your own heart, as it were, practically alive, penetrate far more vividly into the souls of your listeners than those things which are gathered up from a hodge-podge of other authors.¹⁵

world but by the changeless standards of a triune God, who revealed himself uniquely in Christ. . . . The Christian raises such 'animal' things to the rank of the spiritual by treating them aright." Michael Screech, *Ecstasy and The Praise of Folly* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1980), 101.

- 15 Erasmus, *Ratio verae theologiae*, in *The Ecumenical Theology of Erasmus of Rotterdam: A Study of the Ratio Verae Theologiae Translated Into English and Annotated, With a Brief Account of his Ecumenical Writings and Activities Within his Lifetime*, ed. Donald Conroy (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1974). Godin notes Erasmus's awareness of Origen in using this scriptural passage, asserting that "Chez Origène et chez Erasme, le puits à creuser est indifféremment l'Ecriture elle-même ou l'âme qui s'y applique, grâce au glissement que permet le jeu de l'image. . . . Le lieu scripturaire est le même pour les deux hommes. Mais Erasme qui a en vu la formation de l'exégète-prédicateur ne perd pas de vue la transmission de ce qui a été saisi intimement. Origène, quant à lui, visait uniquement la vie spirituelle profonde de ses auditeurs dans ce qu'elle a de plus incommunicable." André Godin, *Erasme lecteur d'Origène* (Geneva: Droz, 1982), 138–40, 405. For a discussion of this text and passage in light of Erasmus's theories of reading and

Erasmus directs his discourse here as much at the cultural renewal of medieval rhetorical and sermonic practices as at individual spiritual renewal. He applies his hermeneutic ideas about the “mystical parables”¹⁶ that are contained in Scripture to a practical, pedagogical reform initiative that is intended to have “immediate use in living.”¹⁷ He writes that the Biblical language of idioms, allegories, similes, and parables remains “efficacious” because it works to “stir up our sluggishness” and allows Christ’s “thought” to “more easily flow into his audience’s hearts through the attraction of metaphor.”¹⁸ Metaphorical, “enigmatic covering” of the truth, he continues, pleases the reader and impels him or her towards that truth far more effectively than the mere statement of “directives for right living.”¹⁹ Interiorizing Scriptural meaning allows the preacher to imitate Scripture with a rhetorically vivid discourse capable of transforming his audience. This transformative power of discourse extends from Scripture to the reader and from the reader into his own use of language.

Simplicity, Secrecy

In the *Ratio verae theologiae*, Erasmus’s rhetorical and theological notion of “simplicity” implies that divine secrets can manifest themselves in and through human language. He bases this notion of simplicity partly on the idea that “no being is simpler nor truer than Christ,”²⁰ because His parables refer to common aspects of human experience. This idea presupposes Christ as simplicity and as the purity of truth. For Erasmus, the Holy Spirit depicts Christ’s “mind” through the Gospel as “the essence of simplicity and truth,” and he writes in a well-known passage that there is no

... dissimilarity between the archetype of the divine mind and the form of speech that issued from it. Just as nothing is more like the Father than the Son, the Word of the Father emanating from the innermost recesses of his spirit, so nothing is more like Christ than the word of Christ uttered

interpretation, see Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 85.

16 Erasmus, *Ratio verae theologiae*, 264.

17 Ibid., 253.

18 Ibid., 263. See Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1977).

19 Erasmus, *Ratio verae theologiae*, 264.

20 Ibid., 307.

in the innermost sanctuary of his holy mind. And you do not gaze with wonder upon this image, do not worship it, scan it with reverent eyes, treasure it in your mind?²¹

The language of secrecy enables Erasmus to describe how inner dialogue (*ratio*) becomes manifested through external discourse (*oratio*), both in the divine and human minds. As Boyle has shown, Erasmus uses the model of divine generation in the Trinity to explain the process whereby divine mysteries are translated into Scripture and human speech.²²

André Godin has furthermore observed that Erasmus uses Origen to explain the relation between the Trinity and its forms of generation and between divine and human language. In his view, Erasmus uses Origen's theory of the Trinity to develop his theory of Trinitarian relations and of the preacher's capacity to both enact and communicate sacred Christian truths.²³ In his *Ecclesiastes*, we can also observe that Erasmus openly rejects the philosophical idea that the human soul contains a little spark of the divine on the grounds that God is not divisible into parts. Nonetheless, he also assimilates the idea of the soul's little divine spark into his views on the Holy Spirit. He acknowledges that the philosophers were correct in saying that man accedes to the "eternal God" through what the Greeks call mind (*nous*) and speech (*logos*). He writes further that the mind (*mens*) is the source (*fons*) and that the Word is the image proceeding from the source (*sermo imago a fonte promanans*). He replaces the theory of the soul's divine spark, which I discussed in the Introduction, with a Christianized theory of inspiration and resemblance. Just as the Word of God is the image of the Father, so too, human speech is a certain image of the human mind, which is the most "wondrous" (*mirabilis*) and powerful (*potentius*) thing man has. He writes that speech is the mirror of man's heart (*speculum est animi*), which the eyes of the body are not able to discern (*cerni non potest*). Only the preacher who "has Christ in his heart" can speak worthily of God. To do so, his heart must be "inhabited" by the spirit of Christ, which allows

21 Desiderius Erasmus, *Enchiridion militis christiani*, in *Spiritualia*, ed. John W. O'Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 72.

22 See Boyle, *Language and Method*, 118; Desiderius Erasmus, "Paraclesis," trans. Pierre Mesnard, vol. 13, *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* (Paris: Droz, 1951), 42. See also Boyle, "Weavers, Farmers, Tailors, Travellers, Masons, Prostitutes, Pimps, Turks, Little Women, and Other Theologians," *Erasmus in English* 3 (1971): 1–7.

23 See André Godin, "Erasmus et le modèle origénien de la prédication," in *Colloquia erasmiana turonensia: stage international d'études humanistes*, ed. Jean-Claude Margolin (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1972), 807–820. Godin points to the importance of Erasmus's *Ecclesiastes* in this regard.

his speech (*sermo*) to transmit the image and voice of God (*imago et vox Dei*). This spirit gives his speech a “secret power” (*vim arcanam*) that allows the preacher’s words to “strike” the ears of his listeners; nonetheless, Erasmus qualifies this statement by suggesting that only God can truly transform the minds of listeners through his “secret inspiration” (*secreto afflato mentes transformat*).²⁴

In his *Paraphrases on the Gospel According to John* (1523), Erasmus writes that nothing expresses the “secret image of the mind” (*occultam mentis imaginem*) more truthfully than speech (*oratio*) that is devoid of lies. Such truthful speech brings forth a certain “secret energy” (*occulta quadam energia*) from the intimate and “hidden recess” of the human mind (*ex intimis mentis arcanis*) and “transfers it into the soul of the listener.” For Erasmus, then, the preacher and interpreter can access the secrets of the “highest mind” (*summa mens*) through the words of Scripture, because they are the immediate embodiment of the “Word of that mind” in its simplicity and efficaciousness.²⁵ He asserts that the faithful can participate directly in the Trinity through the Gospel; man can share the “mind” of Christ by meditating upon and interpreting the Gospel’s hidden meaning. He sees a direct relation between the Holy Spirit and what he calls the *spiritus Evangelicus*—that is, Christ’s spirit as communicated by the Gospel.²⁶ He conceives of the Gospel as a source of rhetorical and spiritual transformation in the reader or listener by virtue of the divine energy that it secretly communicates.

Although Erasmus rejects philosophical theories of the soul’s divine spark in one passage, as we just saw above, he generally makes positive use of the idea by transposing it into different areas. He writes that Christ is present in Scripture in the form of “sparks” (*scintillas*) or “everlasting veins” that the interpreter must search for in Scripture. The metaphorical “mining” of these veins and the stirring of these sparks describe the devout person’s scrutiny of divine

24 On the differences between Saint Paul’s understanding of Christian inspiration (in speech and interpretation) as the gift of God’s spirit who inhabits the believer (*pneumatikos*) and Platonic *nous*, or mantic inspiration, see the article on *pneuma*, *pneumatikos* in Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 332–445. Cf. also Gérard Verbeke, *L’évolution de la doctrine du pneuma, du stoïcisme à s. Augustin* (Paris: D. de Brouwer, 1945).

25 On Erasmus and Scripture, see James Tracy, “Ad Fontes: The Humanist Understanding of Scripture as Nourishment for the Soul,” in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt, Bernard McGinn, and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987): 252–268.

26 Cf. Erasmus’s paraphrases on 2 Tim. 1:11–16 and explicatory note. The relevance of this passage is signaled in the critical notes to Erasmus’s *Paraphrases on John*.

arcana. These *arcana* are, for Erasmus, the very mind (*mens*) of Christ, to which Prophets and apostles were united through the gift of the Spirit and which is present to each believer in history.²⁷

How does this notion of the arcane, secret energy of Scripture relate to Erasmus's use of Saint Paul's and Origen's threefold division of the human persona? It does so through the notion of spirit. Erasmus interprets the term *psychikos* in 1 Cor. 2–16 from the perspective of Origen's division of the human persona.²⁸ The Holy Spirit, in this view, enters the human persona through its faculty of spirit.²⁹ Erasmus illustrates his idea with a comparison, writing, "What the visible sun is here in the visible world the divine mind is in the

27 Erasmus, *Enchiridion*, 12. In his adage titled "War is Sweet to Those Who Have not Tried It" (1515), Erasmus writes that Nature "implanted in man a spark of the mind of God, so that without having any reward in view, he might take a disinterested delight in being of service to all. For that is the property and nature of God, to shower his benefits for the good of the whole world. . . . And so God has placed man in this world as a kind of image of himself, so that like an earthly deity he might provide for the well-being of all." Desiderius Erasmus, *The Adages of Erasmus*, trans. Margaret Mann Phillips (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 312. In his paraphrase on John 1:18, he writes, "To none of the ancients were [the hidden counsels of the divine mind] fully disclosed, though sometimes God revealed [his mind] to them through angels and dreams and visions—a sort of spark from his light . . . but what to others had been conveyed in part, concealed under cover, represented as in sleep, the [only begotten Son] has made for us quite plain and clear, stripped of all wrappings. . . ." Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrase on John*, ed. Robert D. Sider, trans. Jane E. Phillips (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 25. In his work titled the *Hyperaspistes*, he also uses the image of the little spark, writing that "Mankind owes an immense debt to their redeemer, who frees them from hell, shines upon them with the light of faith, inflames them with the fire of charity, transforms them into sons of God. He does not extinguish the good he finds but perfects it; he does not destroy nature but completes it. . . . If reason struggles against emotions that are prone to immorality, then it must needs be that to some degree it discerns and approves of what is moral. The scholastics call this faculty synderesis, though I hardly know where they got the name. It remains even in the most wicked. Otherwise how could it happen that persons who have not yet sunk so deep into the abyss of evil that they revel in the most wicked deeds are so displeased with themselves when they do something wrong?" Desiderius Erasmus, *Hyperaspistes*, in *Controversies*, ed. J.K. Sowards (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 592.

28 On the terms *pneumatikos* and *psychikos* in Saint Paul and the early Church Fathers, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 179 ff.

29 Desiderius Erasmus, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: Acts, Romans, I and II Corinthians: Facsimile of the Final Latin Text With All Earlier Variants*, ed. Anne Reeve and M.A. Screech, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, vol. 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 444.

intelligible world and in that part of you related to it, namely, the spirit.”³⁰ This faculty allows the apostles to receive and teach the “mind” of Christ. God gives the gift of spirit to the Prophets and the apostles, but by exploring the Gospel, each believer can discover the “living water” that gives “eternal life” (*reperiamus aquam vivam salientem in vitam aeternam*). This “living water” can then, in Erasmus’s view, be disseminated in literary forms through the various genres of oratory, paraphrase, or enarration through inspired imitation.

For Erasmus, however, the renovation of human nature must be achieved through ethical life by following Christ’s teachings. While the *Logos* lies mysteriously present in Scripture and the human persona, it is necessary to pursue moral action in the social world for this secret potential to become manifest. Erasmus is concerned with practical pedagogical matters and with the place of sacred rhetoric within the social world. How does the notion of divine secrecy function in his practical, doctrinal speculations? Erasmus’s “Letter to Volz,” the *Enchiridion* (1503, 1518), and *Paraphrases on Romans* (1517) help to answer these questions.

The “Letter to Volz” and the *Enchiridion*

Erasmus’s prefatory letter to the *Enchiridion* represents a point of transition between method and moral doctrine. It bridges hermeneutics and ethics. He wrote the letter to the humanist Paul Volz in 1518 at the same time that he wrote the *Ratio verae theologiae*. He used it as the preface to the new edition of the *Enchiridion* (1518), where he argues that the divine Word is readily accessible in the world as a source of simple piety. As in the *Ratio*, the “Letter to Volz” critiques ecclesiastical and academic professionalized practices, scholastic theologians, monastic orders, and political rulers for neglect of what Erasmus calls the philosophy of Christ.

This philosophy, he writes, requires “only that we live a pure and simple life.”³¹ The *Enchiridion* aims at presenting from the “most pure sources” of the Gospels and Epistles “the whole philosophy of Christ” in a succinct manner as a handbook for Christian living. It seeks to present these sources with simplicity, brevity, and clarity so that they can be directly and easily assimilated to Christian life. In so doing, it aims to correct the use of “oblique metaphors” and “figures of speech” in devotional practice, which conceal the divine *arcana*, and to present them in a manner readily available to those seeking a Christian

30 Erasmus, *Enchiridion*, 65.

31 Ibid., 10.

ethos, or way of life. Erasmus extolls the “true, authentic, and efficacious theology” of Christ that, he asserts, had in previous ages humbled the pride of philosophers and conquered princely scepters.³²

The “Letter to Volz” presupposes principles proper to contemplative devotion but reorients them towards action in the world. The letter calls for reviving early Christianity as a return to and imitation of divine sources. Erasmus writes that, if we act according to the simple requirements of Christian life in religion as in politics, “Christ himself will be with us.”³³ Converting souls to Christianity should be achieved not through weapons, he further writes, but through the rhetorical and spiritual efficaciousness of letters that “breathe paternal charity” and “echo the heart of Peter and Paul.” Such letters should not simply be nominal imitations of Apostolic Christianity but also have the power (*enargeia*) of Apostolic discourse.³⁴ This recalls Erasmus’s assertion that the Word has efficacy because It is “life” itself: “He is said to be ‘living’ who is effectual. . . . He alone is living in the sense that He is real Life itself, the source from which life flows like a fountain to all men.”³⁵ The Word transforms man’s body, soul, and spirit by turning them away from the temptations of pleasure, profit, and honor. It ultimately leads them to Scripture’s spiritual meaning and to the soul’s hidden identity as part of divine creation.

In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus further develops the “mystical parable” of the wellsprings to elucidate how the human persona embodies spiritual resources that remain secret to profane eyes. He invokes imagery from Genesis 12:26 to describe the soul’s latent dignity in the context of a polemical critique of both the Church and professional theologians. Christ, he writes,

... is our Rock; and this rock has in it the seeds of heavenly fire and veins of living water. Abraham long ago dug wells in every country, seeking veins of living water; and when the Philistines filled them with earth they were dug anew by Isaac and his sons, who, not content with restoring the old wells, dug new ones besides. Again the Philistines set up strife and opposition; but he does not cease to dig. Nor are we quite free of Philistines nowadays, who get more pleasure from earth than from fountains of living water—those people, I mean, who reek of earthly things and twist the gospel teaching to serve earthly appetites, compelling it to be the slave of

32 Ibid., 11.

33 Ibid., 10.

34 Ibid., 11.

35 Cf. Desiderius Erasmus, *De sancienda ecclesiae concordia*, trans. Raymond Himelick, (Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Studies, 1971), 51.

human ambition and to enhance their own discreditable gains and their despotic rule.³⁶

Erasmus here denounces corruption in the hierarchy of worldly values; the profane world interprets the Gospel to serve its purposes, neglecting the spiritual requirements needed to open its arcane dimensions. Mistaken interpretive practices go hand in hand with Church corruption and specifically, as Erasmus shows here, its fall into three temptations for worldly goods. The desires to acquire pleasures, ambitions, and honors of power disintegrate the Church, in this point of view. I study this further in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. By association with spirit, the idea of secrecy stands in opposition to this triadic structure of vices (honor, profits, pleasures). That is, the mystical unity of the faithful stands in opposition to the vices that corrupt it; the Church's mystical unity for Erasmus, as he articulates at length in his *Paraphrases on Romans* (1517), bases itself on mutual affect and reciprocal love rather than on exchanges of profit or advantage.³⁷

Erasmus's images of wellsprings articulate his position on the institutional Church's censures and persecutions against the humanist Evangelical movement. He continues his exegetical meditation on the sources and wells, writing,

And if some Isaac or one of his household should dig and find a pure source, at once they are all protests and objections because they know this source will be an obstacle to their gains and block their ambition, even though it makes for Christ's glory. It is not long before they throw earth into it and stop up the source by some corrupt interpretation, driving away the man with the spade, or at the least so befoul the water with mud and filth that he who drinks from it gets more dirt and filth than liquid. They do not wish those who thirst after righteousness to drink from the crystal spring but take them to their trampled cisterns, which are full of rubble and contain no water. But the real sons of Isaac—Christ's true worshippers, that is—must not grow weary of their labors. For those who tip earth into the gospel springs wish to be thought to be of their number, so that now it is by no means safe to teach the pure faith of Christ among Christians. So much have the Philistines grown in strength, fighting for earth, preaching earthly things and not the things of

36 Erasmus, *Enchiridion*, 12.

37 Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, ed. Robert D. Sider, trans. John B. Payne, Albert Rabil Jr., and Warren S. Smith Jr. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 81 and 122.

heaven, human things and not divine—those things, in fact, which tend not to Christ's glory but to the profit of those who traffic in indulgences, in compositions, in dispensations, and suchlike merchandise.³⁸

Here, Erasmus draws on Scripture to develop the opposition between Christian *arcana*, on the one hand, and the threefold scheme of worldly vices, on the other. This tension structures Erasmus's thought and his use of contemplative values for polemical purposes, to accuse the Church's betrayal of its Evangelical origins and its "traffic" in abuse. Erasmus embeds his theological views and their polemical significance in literary practices that are directly inspired by the same Old Testament passages that had nourished Origen's views on the secrets springs of Scripture and their renovating power.

In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus uses elemental metaphors (of earth, fire, and water) to develop alternative forms of spiritual discourse to the institutionalized devotional practices that he, like other humanists of his generation, criticizes for being dry and lifeless. He uses this imagery to embellish and communicate his principles for ethical living. He writes that

... piety like other things has its infancy, it has its periods of growth, it has its full and vigorous adult strength. But every man according to the measure that is given him must strive upwards towards Christ. Of the four elements each has its appointed place. But fire, which has the highest station, gradually sweeps all things into itself and transforms them so far as it may to its own nature. Water it evaporates and turns into air, and air it rarefies and transforms into itself.³⁹

These images of nature's forces illustrate how divine mysteries can enter simple, common language. They point to hidden causal forces in creation that define the visible world. They have unity and thus simplicity in the hidden *Logos* that unites and synthesizes all creative principles, in this view. Erasmus plays on this elemental imagery by also associating it with the image of the center and the circle, which he uses to represent the unity of the faithful. Christ, he explains, is like the immovable and mysterious center in a series of concentric circles.⁴⁰ Christ, in his view, must be the uniting goal (*scopus*) of all worldly action.

38 Erasmus, *Enchiridion*, 12–13.

39 Ibid., 17.

40 "Let Christ remain what he is, the centre, with several circles running around him. Do not move that central mark from its place." Ibid., 14.

Erasmus writes in his *Paraphrases on Romans* (1517) that Mosaic law reveals that sin is implanted in man, in his flesh, but that man can become “adopted by Christ.” This adoption, rather than ceremonies or laws, joins believers in Spirit.⁴¹ Spirit is the plenitude and vital force that kills desires and gives a “secret taste” of salvation.” The Spirit, he further writes, is “agile” and “lively,” and most importantly, it guards against the fluxes of fortune and misfortune. Community in “mutual affection,” or “pure affection,” without the need for ceremony becomes the basis for the community of the “secret religion of the Gospel,” which discloses the path to salvation as flowing from God “like a spring” and guards against misfortune. Erasmus develops similar ideas in his *Paraphrases on Galatians* (1519), where he contrasts the literal letter’s “shell” to the spirit’s “marrow,” which lies “concealed” in ways that go beyond the narration of events.⁴² Just as the ruling aspect of the body lies hidden under the heavy cover of corporeal existence, so too, in the Scriptural story, there lies concealed something “deeper and more sublime.” Erasmus thus draws a direct relation between the idea of the ruling aspect of the soul as the hidden element of divinity in the human persona and the ways in which Scriptural secrecy goes beyond the narration of events. Purity of intention becomes the “sanctuary,” or inward disposition, that protects the secret of Christ’s presence in the world. Revelation occurs to those with faith, who maintain simplicity over and against worldly deception.⁴³ God sees the “inmost recesses of the mind,” beyond dissimulated intentions. In the body of the Christian Church, such as Erasmus describes it here, community is defined by mutual love rather than by profit; it accommodates the weakness of each and follows in the imitation of Christ. The “secret religion of the Gospel” discloses or spreads the news that salvation flows from God as from a spring.

Throughout these writings, then, the “simplicity” of Christian mystery contrasts with the divisiveness of institutional philosophical and theological practices, which obfuscate the fundamental principles of Christian living. Erasmus attributes a privileged place to Scriptural metaphor for bridging metaphysical, hermeneutic, and ethical principles. Through these different kinds of imagery (elemental, geometric, aquatic, and fiery), Erasmus imbues his ethical works with both rhetorical vividness and polemical significance. The “mystical” metaphor of the wellsprings has polemical implications as well. The Christian interpretation of the wellsprings, it is safe to say, has always been apologetic in nature. But it helps Erasmus to spell out his views on the Church’s negligence

41 Erasmus, *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, 43–44.

42 Ibid., 119.

43 Ibid., 61, 67–68.

of Scripture as he perceived it in the sixteenth century. He laments and complains of how the institutions of Church and state have neglected and abused Scripture. He decries this throughout numerous other works.

Erasmus uses these literary metaphors in his later adage on war and peace, entitled "War is Sweet to Those Who Have not Tried It," where he writes that the teachings of Christ breathe "the spirit of peace."⁴⁴ They instruct those "who sincerely despised the things for which this world contends" and "called them blessed who think nothing of riches 'and their daughter Pride,' for he calls them the poor in spirit; blessed are those too who spurn the pleasures of this world, whom he calls those that mourn; those who allow themselves to be turned out of their possessions. . . ."⁴⁵ The corruption of this unity in spirit results from the temptations of worldly honor, riches, and pleasures. The apostles, he writes, taught "exactly the same, they who had imbibed the spirit of Christ in its pristine purity, and were still drunken with that glorious wine."⁴⁶

Erasmus adapts the Old Testament imagery of the wells, also a central image in Origen's thought, to describe the soul's potential for restoring itself as an image of the divine. Origen is not Erasmus's exclusive influence in Trinitarian and image theology—there were, without doubt, also the works of Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and Saint Basil. The apologetic thrust behind Late Antique arguments helps Erasmus to develop the satirical invective that feathers his critique of institutional corruption. The renewed interest in Evangelical literature with patristic philosophical commentary fuels Erasmus's rhetorical theory and strategies, as it does his ethics, under a broad and inclusive understanding of Christian spirituality and literature.

Michael Heath has pointed to the importance of figurative language in Erasmus's thought. In his view, Erasmus uses figurative language in accordance with both Saint Paul's and Origen's threefold division of the soul.⁴⁷ Metaphorical

44 Desiderius Erasmus, *The Adages of Erasmus. Translations Selected from the Collected works of Erasmus*, ed. William Barker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 328.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Heath writes, "As options, spirit and flesh are totally opposed, but in the paradox of human nature they may be reconciled through the mediating function of anima 'soul,' so that the body is no longer a disruptive force but may become a temple of the Spirit. In exegesis, similarly, the carnal or literal sense may be charged with spiritual significance through the figurative and symbolizing powers of language. At the root of these mediations is, for Erasmus, the extraordinary reality of the Incarnation, by which Christ relates the material events of history to their spiritual purpose. It was from Origen that he derived not only this recognition of the centrality of the Incarnation but also the idea that it was in a sense extended through the Scriptures, that the word of God truly grasped is a

transfer for Erasmus signifies the soul's shift from the carnal to the spiritual as it contemplates the hidden "seeds" and "veins" of purity in Scripture. For Erasmus, metaphorically "opening the sources" of pure water means that simple, Christ-centered faith gives one the capacity to "open" the "secrets of heavenly wisdom."⁴⁸ The language and practices of spirituality should imitate the fact that Christ spoke and acted simply and gently; Christ's wisdom can be "mined" in the "pure sources" of simple books that present the principles of spiritual life not in rational language but in common metaphors.⁴⁹

These metaphors mark an important point in common between the idea that a secret principle of unity connects the human mind to the divine mind and the view that the Gospel contains moral secrets and simple truths that readily lead to right action. Such metaphors nourish Erasmus's literary, pedagogical, and reformist thought, as we can see in his "Letter to Volz," which shows how the hidden but manifest presence of the *Logos* in Scripture and its mediation through literary works that translate, emulate, or comment upon it constitute an important postulate in his moral thought. The "Letter to Volz" prefaces a practically oriented, moral, and doctrinal work concerned with action in the world by synthesizing a set of Christian moral precepts into a readily accessible compilation of rules for Christian life.

Erasmus adapts Origen's division of body, soul, and spirit as the foundation for Christian life. This movement between hermeneutic secrecy and moral doctrine is evident in the *Enchiridion's* fourth and fifth rules. There, Erasmus fuses Origen's threefold division of the human persona (body, soul, and spirit) with the Stoic theory of indifferents, with which Origen was also familiar.⁵⁰ As

means by which Christ's presence reaches through history." Michael J. Heath, "Introduction," in *Expositions of the Psalms*, ed. Dominic Baker-Smith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), xxxv.

48 James Tracy has noted that the metaphor of "opening" the sources is central to Erasmus's use of the term "philosophia Christi": "In his usage of terms 'philosophia Christi' is linked again and again to this common but compelling humanist metaphor: 'all the springs and sources of Christian philosophy are enshrined in the books of the evangelists and the apostles'; the philosophy of Christ is drawn 'from these few books, as if from the purest springs,' much more easily than Aristotle's philosophy is extracted from spiny tomes." James Tracy, "Liberation through the *Philosophia Christi*: Erasmus as a Reformer of Doctrina, 1514–1521," *Lutherjahrbuch* 62 (1995): 42.

49 Erasmus, "Paraclesis," 36–37.

50 In this Stoic tradition, "good" and "bad" are relative terms that apply only to internal states of being; what is good is the ordering of the soul's various parts into harmony; what is bad is their falling into disarray. Those things (external or internal) on which moral virtue

Screech has discussed, Origen's commentaries on the book of Romans inspires these chapters directly. After establishing guidelines for faith, for action, and for the avoidance of illusions, the fourth rule makes Christ the center and goal of Christian life. He metaphorically compares Christ to a central point, from which a series of concentric circles radiate outward; each consecutive circle represents a different sector of society, but each should, in Erasmus's view, have Christ as its center. Each should maintain a direct relation to the Word, which accommodates itself to them and presents itself as their ultimate goal: "place Christ before you," he writes, "as the only goal of your life, and direct to him alone all your pursuits, all your endeavors, all your leisure time and hours of occupation."⁵¹

In his fourth rule, Erasmus associates a Stoic theory of values (indifferents) with Origen's threefold division, to explain how the Christian should turn his or her life towards that goal:

As you hasten on a direct course towards the goal of the highest good, whatever you encounter on the way should be rejected or accepted according as it either facilitates or impedes your progress. In general these things fall into three categories. Some are so evil that they can never be considered good, such as to avenge a wrong or to bear ill will towards someone. These are always to be shunned no matter how great the advantage to be gained and no matter what the torment. For nothing can harm a good man except for evil alone. Some things, on the contrary, are so intrinsically good that they cannot become evil, such as wishing well to all men, helping one's friends by honest means, hating vice, and enjoying

does not depend are called "indifferents," or *adiaphora*. Although not essential to virtue, these "indifferents" can have either a negative or positive value depending on how they are approached, or in other words, the end for which they are used. On the importance of this idea in Erasmus's thought, see Screech, *Ecstasy*, 97: "Two of the greatest Renaissance exponents of this theology of 'indifference' based on St. Paul are Erasmus and Rabelais. (*The Tiers Livre de Pantagruel* makes it into the standard of wise Christian conduct.) But Erasmus, much more than Rabelais, encourages the wise Christian to spiritualise the *adiaphora*, drawing them away from the body towards the spirit and judging them not by the momentary standards of a fleeting world but by the changeless standards of a Tribune God, who revealed himself uniquely in Christ. . . . The Christian raises such 'animal' things to the rank of the spiritual by treating them aright." The bibliography on *adiaphora* in antiquity is extensive. On *adiaphora*, see Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. Screech discusses the importance of Origen's threefold division of man for Erasmus and its relation to the Stoic theory of indifferents. See Screech, *Ecstasy*, 98 ff.

51 Erasmus, *Enchiridion*, 61.

pious conversations. Some are in between, such as good health, beauty, strength, eloquence, learning, and the like. Of this last class of things none should be sought after on its own account nor made use of to a greater or lesser extent except in so far as it leads to the supreme goal.⁵²

The theory of indifferents (*adiaphora*) serves to reinforce Erasmus's view that Christian philosophy involves practical living, specifically a practice and a habit, which he orders according to the division of body, soul, and spirit. This division presupposes that the soul's rational functions can discern these levels of value and act accordingly and that these rational functions govern the soul. Erasmus takes up Origen's precedent for synthesizing Pagan philosophy and Scripture. Monastic philosophies throughout the Middle Ages also upheld views that the soul's potential spiritualization can be achieved through *askesis*. The monastic tradition preserves Christianity's ties with Stoic philosophy, although Erasmus decries Franciscan and Dominican mendicant orders for betraying their founders' examples and for seeking worldly ambition over spiritual poverty. Erasmus syncretizes philosophy and Evangelism by returning to the foundations of Apostolic Christianity, and he represents one of Christianity's most insightful thinkers on the topics of decorum in Christian eloquence and on the place of eloquence in social, political, and religious reform.⁵³

The *Enchiridion's* fifth rule draws on the Pauline and Origenist threefold division (body, soul, and spirit) as a practical model for what the Christian should pursue or avoid in life. The rule uses the threefold division of the soul to assert that perfect piety "is the attempt to progress always from visible things, which are usually imperfect or indifferent, to invisible, according to the division of man discussed earlier."⁵⁴ He distinguishes here, as he does in his *Paraphrases on Romans*, between the interior and the exterior man. This opposition implies a dualism between the world of invisible (or intelligible) truths and the world of visible (corporeal) appearances. Man, he writes, represents a third world because he participates in both body and soul: "Since we are but pilgrims in the visible world, we should never make it our fixed abode, but

52 Ibid.

53 Leclercq writes, "Dans le Moyen-Âge monastique, aussi bien que dans l'Antiquité, *philosophia* désigne non pas une théorie ou une manière de connaître, mais une sagesse vécue, une manière de vivre selon la raison." Dom Jean Leclercq, "Pour l'histoire de l'expression 'philosophie chrétienne,'" *Mélanges de science religieuse* 9 (1952): 221. Also cited in Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1993), 63, 222.

54 Erasmus, *Enchiridion*, 65.

should relate by a fitting comparison everything that occurs to the senses either to the angelic world or, in more practical terms, to morals and to that part of man that corresponds to the angelic.”⁵⁵ The visible world should be “referred to God and to the invisible part of yourself. In that way, whatever offers itself to the senses will become for you an occasion for the practice of piety.”⁵⁶ As we see in the adage titled “Sileni Alcibiadis,” spirit, in Erasmus’s view, should occupy the summit of value but is scorned by the profane world.

Source and Mystery: Erasmus’s “Sileni Alcibiadis”

In his adage the “Sileni Alcibiadis” (1515), Erasmus uses a literary fable drawn ultimately from Plato’s *Symposium*. The Sileni were also, throughout later lore and traditions, as Erasmus explains, figurine boxes used by apothecaries and for other purposes in ancient cultures. The word *sileni* also referred to little statues that conceal figurines of the Gods inside. Erasmus focuses on the Silenus image to extend secrecy as a hermeneutical principle into the sphere of moral life.⁵⁷ He uses the mythological motif of the satyr named Silenus and the figurines (boxes within boxes) that are modeled on his appearance to compare Christ to Socrates and to hurl a satirical dart at religious and political leaders for failing to properly order the hierarchy of values to which they are originally beholden.

Erasmus notes that in the *Symposium*, Plato compares Socrates to Silenus, because he has the outward appearance of a satyr; his uncomely physical appearance and outward jests conceal the divine wisdom he holds. His ugliness contrasts with the “beautiful treasures of wisdom” that he “conceals in his soul.”⁵⁸ Socrates’s speech is like Silenus because it is plain, unvarnished, and unpretentious as would “befit” a man of “low standing.”⁵⁹ “But if a man,” he

55 Ibid., 66.

56 Ibid.

57 For the only discussion of the secret in Erasmus, see Michel Jeanneret’s article, “Du mystère à la mystification. Le sens caché à la renaissance et dans Rabelais,” *Versants* 2 (1981): 31–52. See also Louis Marin’s work in the same volume, titled “Secret, dissimulation et art de persuader chez Pascal,” *Versants* 2 (1981): 53–74.

58 Desiderius Erasmus, “Sileni Alcibiadis,” in *The Catholic Reformation: Savanarola to Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. John C. Olin, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 72.

59 Ibid., 71. Henri de Lubac notes that Pico della Mirandola uses the image of the Silenus in *Conclusiones*, 1.8 (1487). Pico uses it to describe the Old Testament prefiguration of the New Testament. See Henri de Lubac, *Exegèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l’Écriture*, vol. 4 (Paris: Aubier, 1959–64), 398. Pico writes, “if in his books Moses seems an unpolished

writes (taking up Alcibiades's comparison from Plato's *Symposium*), "penetrates within and sees the content of Socrates' talk exposed, he will find that there is nothing but sound sense inside, and that his talk is almost the talk of a god..."⁶⁰

For Erasmus, the first impression that the Silenus creates as being merely ugly becomes transformed in the "eye" of an "intent observer"; it leads those observers to realize that behind the mask of ugliness, the Silenus contains spiritual values. The Silenus represents the spiritual transformation that occurs as the mind learns to refer external values to internal values and the body to the soul. It represents the appearance that protects inward secrets, divine mysteries, that are latent within the human persona and that can be attained through contemplative perspicacity—through the "eyes of faith"—into the meaning of God's appearance in the world through the image of Christ.

Erasmus uses the Silenus as a figure of Christ. He uses it, in other words, as a typological model for salvation history. He applies this typological model to profane and sacred literature, as others had done before, but perhaps with greater clarity and intensity. The Silenus's significance derives ultimately from the Christian view that the New Testament's truths precede those of the Old Testament and Pagan letters. Erasmus asserts that Christ used parables to proclaim his message to the crowds, divulging his mysteries only to a few "openly and without figures." Erasmus uses the Silenus as a figure for Christological interpretation of the Old Testament when he asserts that

The very Scriptures themselves have their own Sileni. If you remain on the surface, a thing may sometimes appear absurd; if you pierce through to the spiritual meaning, you will adore the divine wisdom. Speaking of the Old Testament, for instance, if you look at nothing but the story, and

popularizer rather than a philosopher or theologian or master of great wisdom, let us call to mind that it was a well-known practice of the sages of old either simply not to write on religious subjects or to write of them under some other guise. For this reason these subjects are called mysteries (and things which are not secret are not mysteries)... "Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, trans. Douglas Carmichael, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1965), 68. As de Lubac shows, in the Orphic Hymns (translated by Ficino in 1462), Pico searches for the symbols of Christian dogma (*profunde et intellectualiter*) that, Pico writes, appear like the Silenus—under a grotesque and disfigured aspect. On Erasmus and Pico, see Jean-Claude Margolin, "Pic de la Mirandole et Erasme de Rotterdam," in *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Convegno internazionale di studi nel cinquecentesimo anniversario della morte (1494–1994)*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Firenze: Olschki, 1997).

60 Erasmus, "Sileni Alcibiadis," 111.

you hear of Adam being made from mud, his little wife being abstracted secretly from his flank as he slept . . . would you not think all this a fable from Homer's workshop? . . . And yet under these veils, great heaven! What wonderful wisdom lies hidden!⁶¹

Through these references to hearing and seeing, he signals how the Silenus functions as a parable according to the "method" that Christ Himself used. He uses the Silenus to imitate Biblical parable:

The parables of the Gospel, if you take them at face value—who would not think that they came from a simple ignorant man? And yet if you crack the nut, you find inside that profound wisdom, truly divine, a touch of something which is clearly like Christ himself. . . . in both the domains of nature and faith, you will find the most excellent things are the deepest hidden, and the furthest removed from profane eyes. In the same way, when it is a matter of knowledge, the real truth always lies deeply hidden, not to be understood easily or by many people.⁶²

As prefigurations of Christ, Moses's writings appear commonplace, crude, ordinary, and like "rough bark." For profane eyes and ears, Moses is scorned as mediocre and trivial. To a profane audience, "nothing is less credible . . . than his having in his depths anything more divine than what he puts forth on the surface."⁶³ These veils have a protective function but also spur the devout's desire to find Scripture's hidden meaning. The Silenus fable thus extends Erasmus's views on Biblical metaphor and parable into the spheres of moral and literary thought.

The idea that Christ manifested himself in various typological guises throughout history in "types" has a central place in Erasmus's Silenus adage. He writes that numerous Sileni lived through history: Socrates, Epictetus, Christ, the prophets, the apostles, certain bishops and popes, the Old Testament, and the sacraments were all Sileni, or types of Christ.⁶⁴ The Silenus adage turns its reader's attention, in Socratic mode, to the corrupted state of philosophical schools, worldly powers, and the Church; they have, he asserts, estranged themselves from the teachings of the apostles, who were "poor, unschooled,

61 Ibid., 75.

62 Ibid., 76.

63 Ibid., 70.

64 Ibid., 71–72. In Chapter 3, I argue that secrecy functions as a hermeneutic veil by association with the theme of the cover.

unlettered, base-born, powerless . . . objects of everyone's scorn," but who no tyrants could equal in power.⁶⁵ He denounces the professionalized Aristotelian philosophy of the universities as "stupid, ignorant, trivial" when compared to the "very spring" of "heavenly wisdom." "True authentic wisdom" is more likely found "in one obscure individual, generally thought simple-minded and half-crazy, whose mind has not been taught by a Scotus (the subtle as they say) but by the heavenly spirit of Christ. . . ."⁶⁶ He denounces clergy "who think themselves next to the gods . . . and masters of all," writing that "those who are furthest from true religion are just the people who claim to be the most religious—in name, in costume, and in external appearance of sanctity. And so it is always the same: what is excellent in any way is always the least showy."⁶⁷

The latter assertion—that the excellent is always hidden—represents one of Erasmus's central spiritual principles, and it shares important elements with his theories about the way divine wisdom accommodates itself to the created world. In the "*Sileni Alcibiadis*," he considers the perpetual search for divine mystery an essential factor in moral life:

Indeed, this is the nature of truly noble things; what is most valuable in them is hidden away in secret, what is worthless is exposed to view, and they hide their treasure under a miserable covering rather than show it to profane eyes.⁶⁸

Elsewhere, he uses a web of agricultural metaphors to help argue that there is a hidden order within nature that escapes the attention of those seeking only profane pleasure. Again he uses metaphors related to those of the wellsprings to describe the vision of nature's principles, which are "secreted in the inward parts," when he writes,

In trees, it is the flowers and leaves which are beautiful to the eye; their spreading bulk is visible far and wide. But the seed, in which lies the power of it all, how tiny a thing it is how secret, how far from flattering the sight or showing itself off! Gold and gems are hidden by nature in the deepest recesses of the earth. Among what they call the elements, the most important are those furthest removed from the senses, like air and fire. In living things, what is best and most vital is secreted in the inward

65 Ibid., 74.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 74–75.

68 Ibid., 72–73.

parts (*in intimis abditum habent*). In man, what is most divine and immortal is what cannot be seen.⁶⁹

Erasmus also uses such elemental imagery in the *Enchiridion*: just as the elements represent the unseen, most important aspects of the visible world, so too, the Silenus and Socrates represent those who have their “most vital” elements “secreted in the inward parts” (*in intimis abditum*). What he calls the “power of form” (*vis formae*) here refers to invisible principles that govern and structure the natural world, the world of scientific discourse on nature, and Scriptural discourse.⁷⁰ Secrecy describes the relation between the invisible hierarchical structures in visible reality.

Erasmus also refers to the power of the heavens: “You see the water, the salt and the oil, you hear the spoken words, these are like the face of the Silenus; you cannot hear or see the power of God (*vim coelestem*), without which all these things would be but mockeries.” Such is the effect of Scripture; its mysteries (*arcanae litterae*) confound human reason and its attachments to surface matters (*superficie*). Erasmus writes (I add Latin terms in parentheses),

What wonderful wisdom lies hidden (*quam splendida latet sapientia*)! The parables of the gospel, if you take them at face value (*corticem*)—who would not think that they came from a simple ignorant man (*idiotae*)? And yet if you crack the nut (*nucem frangans*), you find inside that profound wisdom (*arcanam illam ac vere divinam sapientiam*), truly divine, a touch of something which is clearly (*plane*) like Christ himself. It would be too discursive to go on piling up examples; suffice it to say that in both the domains of nature and faith, you will find the most excellent things are the deepest hidden (*in naturae simul ac mysticis rebus, ut quicque praestantissimum est, ita quam maxime videbis abstrusum et a prophanis oculis longissime semotum*).⁷¹

He extends the figure of Silenus to Socrates and to Christ; then he directs the adage towards a satirical denunciation of the contemporary Church, state, and laity. When it is a matter of knowledge, he argues, the real truth always lies deeply hidden and is not to be understood easily or by many people. Erasmus

69 Ibid., 75.

70 On the idea of the power of form and law (*vis formae*), see Pierre Bourdieu, “La Force du droit,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 64 (1986): 3–19 and Jacques Derrida, *Force de loi* (Paris, Galilée, 1994).

71 Erasmus, “Sileni Alcibiadis,” 75.

writes that the “stupid generality” of men often blunder into wrong judgments, because they judge everything from the evidence of the bodily senses, and they are deceived by false imitations of the good and the evil. They lack the proper ordering of the soul and the ability to discriminate. Such men “are like Sileni inside out.”⁷²

The Silenus represents an emblem of change and reform, in Erasmus’s hands, by making secrecy and mystery a basis for social critique in literature and philosophy. Erasmus distinguishes between seekers of mystery and those bound to profane values when he writes,

Here then lies the difference between the follower of the world and the follower of Christ: the first admires and chases after the worthless things which strike the eye at once, while the second strives only for the things which are least obvious at a glance, and furthest from the physical world—and the rest he passes over altogether, or holds them lightly, judging everything by its inner value.⁷³

For Erasmus, the Silenus’s significance also applies to the relation between politics and power, as we see when he writes, “When you see the scepter, the badges of rank, . . . do you not revere the prince like a god on earth, and think you are looking at something more than human? But open the reversed silen-
us, and you find a tyrant, sometimes the enemy of his people. . . .” Tyrants act for the people in name and appearance but “impose themselves as magistrates and guardians of the common weal, when in reality they are wolves and prey upon the state.”⁷⁴ This denunciation of the theater of worldly illusion rests on the idea that there exists a secret power communicating itself through nature, which the world has ignored. Those who abuse ecclesiastical power maintain their authority through the production of illusory appearances that have convincing gravity, but these abusers become exposed as foolish when viewed from the point of view of the Silenus’s significance:

. . . if you watch that solemn consecration of theirs [bishops], if you contemplate them in their new robes, the mitre gleaming with jewels and gold . . . the whole mystic panoply which clothes them from head to foot, you would take them to be divine beings, something more than human. But open the Silenus, and you find nothing but a soldier, a trader, or

⁷² Ibid., 76.

⁷³ Ibid., 77.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 76.

finally a despot, and you will decide that all those splendid insignia were pure comedy.⁷⁵

Physical appearances can be deceiving—but open the Silenus, and you can find a pig, lion, a bear, or an ass. And, Erasmus adds,

There are those . . . who, judging by their flowing beards, pale faces . . . might be taken for Serapio and St. Paul; but open them up, and you find mere buffons, gluttons, vagabonds, libertines, nay, robbers and oppressors, but in another way, I dare say more poisonous because it is more concealed, in fact as they say, *the treasure turns out to be a lump of coal*.⁷⁶

The Silenus image reinforces the play of discursive opposites between health and sickness, insight and blindness. It enables Erasmus's invective against the corruptions of worldly power, political practices, and concepts of just war. It can hide divinity, or it can hide a toxin. Secrecy's significance in this sense remains relative to the perspective from which one considers appearances and what may lie behind them. Most importantly here, Erasmus relies also on Saint Paul's and Origen's threefold division to reinforce secrecy and its function in his literary critique when he writes,

If you divide man according to Saint Paul into three parts, body, soul, and spirit (I am using his very words), it is true that the common people value highest what is most obvious—the lowest part, condemned by the Apostle. The middle term, which he considers good if it joins forces with the spirit, is approved of by many also. But the spirit, the best part of ourselves, from which springs as from a fountain all our happiness—the spirit, by which we are joined to God—they are so far from thinking it is precious that they never even ask whether it exists or what it is, although Paul mentions it so often in his teaching. And so we get this utterly reversed estimate of things; what we should particularly honour passes without a word and what we should strive for with all our might is regarded with contempt . . . the mask is preferred to the truth, the shadow to the reality, the counterfeit to the genuine, the fleeting to the substantial, the momentary to the eternal.⁷⁷

75 Ibid., 77.

76 Ibid., 76.

77 Origen writes, "Since therefore the soul is evidently included neither in that which is according to the flesh nor in that which is destined to be the Son of God in power

How could people pass over what is self-evidently the most important thing? “What we should particularly honour,” the spirit, goes unconsidered by those without spirit. The spirit “springs as from a fountain of all our happiness,” yet those who are without it fail to perceive it and become ignorant to its presence in others as well. They ignore its very presence in Saint Paul’s writings, too, Erasmus argues, even though it was the Apostle’s own “teaching.”

The “Sileni Alcibiadis” brings together many of the elements at play in Erasmus’s exegetical, theological, and literary works. It shows how deeply invested Erasmus was in literature as a medium for communicating his theological views. Another important dimension explored by Screech concerns Erasmus’s use of prophetic voice in his exegetical and other works, such as *The Praise of Folly* and *Commentary on Psalm 33*. He uses Silenic imagery in conjunction with Isaiahian prophetic poetry, in particular the figure of the Man of Sorrows. Through typological interpretation, Erasmus argues that the Silenus, Socrates, and other historical figures in salvation history, including the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, prefigure Christ and incarnate his values. Those values have appeared in various guises throughout recorded history, but, in Erasmus’s view, the suffering servant teaches us the way in which both Christ’s and Silenus’s mysteries should be contemplated. In the “Sileni Alcibiadis,” Erasmus asks,

But is not Christ the most extraordinary Silenus of all? If it is permissible to speak of him in this way—and I cannot see why all who rejoice in the name of Christians should not do their best to imitate it. If you look on the face only of the Silenus-image, what could be lower or more contemptible, measured by popular standards? Obscure and poverty-stricken parents, a humble home; poor himself, he has a few poor men for disciples, chosen ‘not from kings’ palaces, not from the learned seats of the Pharisees or the schools of the Philosophers, but from the customs-house and the fisherman’s nets. Then think of his life, how far removed from any pleasure, the life in which he came through hunger and weariness,

according to the Spirit of holiness, it is my belief that the Apostle is using his customary habit in this passage, knowing that the soul is always midway between the spirit and the flesh and that it joins itself either to the flesh, thus becoming one with the flesh, or it associates itself with the spirit and becomes one with spirit. Consequently if it is joined with the flesh men become fleshly; but if it unites with the spirit they become spiritual. And for that reason he does not explicitly designate the soul but only the flesh and the spirit. For he knows that the soul inevitably attaches itself to one of these two aspects. . . . So then Paul, now aware that the soul of Jesus, united with the Lord and attaching to him, was one Spirit of holiness with him, thus does not designate it explicitly lest he should break apart the unity of Jesus. . . .” Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1.5.3.

causation and mockery, to the cross. The mystic prophet was contemplating him from this angle when he wrote, 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men' [Isa. 53:2–3], and much more in this vein. But if one may attain to a closer look at this Silenus-image, that is if he deigns to show himself to the purified eyes of the soul, what unspeakable riches you will find there.⁷⁸

Erasmus's Christ is a radically suffering, kenotic one who became lowly, humble, and poor, providing a model for imitation in spiritual life, without care for worldly status.⁷⁹ He, moreover, writes that in the book of Isaiah, the "mystic prophet" uses the figure of the suffering servant to criticize worldly power.⁸⁰ Christian exegesis had already for a long time described the suffering servant as a Christ figure because he atones for his people's sins. He achieves his ends through gentleness rather than force.⁸¹ Boyle has pertinently written, "Christ does not," in Erasmus's view, "assail men from above like the gods of antiquity, but works through the interiority of speech in civilization."⁸²

Erasmus wrote that history contains mystical truths, or *arcana*, that can be opened up through exegesis like the pure wellsprings of Abraham. Like the hidden truths of the Silenus, the interpreter who has "the eyes of a pure heart to see the things of the spirit, and pure ears with which to perceive the secrets of heavenly wisdom" can open the hidden, Christological meaning of literal narrative.⁸³ Erasmus also referred to the suffering victim of Psalm 21 as the

78 Erasmus, "Sileni Alcibiadis," 73.

79 The exact way one might live that spiritual life, however, is not articulated in detail. That is in part because, although Erasmus asserts Christ's humanity as an ethical model to be followed, he is primarily using the figure of Christ here to advance a piercing critique of then-contemporary religious, social, and political practices.

80 Isa. 51:6. The fourth song of Isaiah opposes worldly power and wealth, on the one hand, and the promises of salvation, on the other: earthly treasures, the Prophet declares, "will wear out like a garment," while the divine gift of salvation that "will be forever." *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1050.

81 Isa. 42:1–4, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1035.

82 Boyle, *Language and Method*, 116.

83 Cited and translated in Michael J. Heath, "Introduction," in *Expositions of the Psalms*, ed. Dominic Baker-Smith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), xxv. On Erasmus's interpretation of David's change of countenance as a prefiguration of Christ's folly on the cross and his view that the prophetic exegesis opens the providential truths latent within the Old Testament for the reader to contemplate, see Screech, *Ecstasy and The Praise of Folly*, 62 ff. The textual connections between Erasmus's enarrations and the Silenus are

“Silenus of History.”⁸⁴ Screech has shown that Erasmus conceived of the interpreter who unveils the mysteries of Christian wisdom as a Silenus.⁸⁵ The interpreter, along with Christ, Saint Paul, and the prophets, are all “Sileni;” all have the gift of spirit to “open up the mysteries of hidden scripture.” Here also, Erasmus reasserts the connection between these mystical themes and moral life, writing that diligence “is also required—not that the Spirit should work less in us, but work more secretly.”⁸⁶ The Holy Spirit acts secretly under the guise of human action.

In his commentary on Psalm 33, Erasmus draws on both the figures of the Silenus and the suffering servant in Isaiah as ideal images for contemplation of divine secrecy. He compares the narrative of David’s change to a Silenus; both veil a mystery to be opened through Christological interpretation. Of Old Testament narratives, Erasmus writes that

... if the Lord will deign to be with us while we extract the kernel, while we grind out this fine flour, while we open up this Silenus, your souls will delight in spiritual delights; they will feed on wholesome food and be amazed into contemplation of divine wisdom.⁸⁷

Erasmus compares the story of David’s change to others found in Pagan literature, notably Ulysses and Brutus, who similarly feigned madness. These profane examples, he writes, should be contemplated through the “eyes of faith”—a term that echoes the monastic and Augustinian heritage in Erasmus’s thought:

If we open the Silenus, we shall see that in the human David there is hidden another, more sublime David, and in Saul we shall see another and much more pernicious Tyrant. If we open the eyes of faith we shall see in that fugitive, hungry man, ‘changing his countenance’ and exposed to so many perils, him who is truly called King of heaven and earth, the Lord Jesus Christ.⁸⁸

referred to and discussed both in Screech and, more comprehensively, in the critical apparatus to the texts.

84 Cited and translated in Screech, *Ecstasy and The Praise of Folly*, 220.

85 *Ibid.*, 220 ff.

86 *Ibid.*, 223.

87 *Ibid.*, 225.

88 *Ibid.*

David's change of countenance prefigured Christ's becoming; Lefèvre called this the "spiritual intelligence" that unites Old and New Testaments and that contemplation attains in spiritual vision. Erasmus writes,

You can see, dearly Beloved, what majesty of mysteries lies hidden within the Silenus of this history [of David's feigning madness]. What David did was not all that important, but what was represented to us by this history was a sight full of wonder for the very angels. Good, then. We leave David and come to Christ, we leave the letter that kills and find the life-giving Spirit. Let us take care to love what we understand; let us strive to imitate the sight which is set before us.⁸⁹

In the "Sileni Alcibiadis," then, Erasmus addresses a contemporary issue in critical terms by applying early Christian apologetic structures of thought to an early sixteenth-century philosophical and religious culture and to a reform that revived and maintained the importance of both literary imagery (in this case, the Silenus) and its discursive effect (in Platonic and Socratic dialogue). Erasmus uses the idea of Christ's radically human nature to assert the presence of mystery within the practical, ethical lives of the faithful and to deliver a piercing literary critique of religious, social, and political practices. Throughout this chapter, I have examined the importance of the Christian anthropology that Erasmus develops through a threefold, Pauline conception of the soul. I have also examined how he uses it to call for a reform of hermeneutic, linguistic, and ethical practices. Erasmus draws on patristic theories of the soul that Lefèvre and Briçonnet, two of France's leading sixteenth-century humanist Evangelical reformers, also used in their literature for the purpose of seeking social, cultural, religious, and political reform. Neither Lefèvre d'Étaples nor Guillaume Briçonnet was Erasmian; to the contrary, the early French Evangelical humanists shunned Erasmus, as I discuss in the following chapters. Nonetheless, despite the differences that separated Erasmus from Lefèvre and Briçonnet, we can find certain common structures of thought in their literary works, owing partly to a common interest in patristic sources. It is to the works of these French thinkers that I now turn, to consider how French Evangelical humanists also embed their theological thought in literary works that make secrecy a central concern.

89 Ibid., 230.

Mysticism and Aesthetics in French Evangelical Humanism (1450–1536)

General Introduction

Although it is well known that Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite de Navarre avoided association with Erasmus and were decidedly not Erasmians, we can nonetheless compare Briçonnet's spiritual anthropology to Erasmus's understanding of the relation between body, soul, and spirit. This model for the human persona and the notions of secrecy that it involves served Briçonnet as a way of pursuing political and ecclesiastical reforms in France through literary speculations on the soul's latent dignity.

Marguerite de Navarre's (1492–1549) spiritual correspondence with the Bishop of Meaux, Guillaume Briçonnet (1470–1534), offers insight into the relations between French Catholic Evangelical mysticism and French royal politics in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Their epistolary correspondence (1521–1524) provides a view into the French Catholic reform movement's emergence and its close connections with mystical philosophy, humanism, and Christian Evangelism.¹ In this chapter, I study how the letters bring together humanist and Evangelical discourses on secrecy. They do so by mining ancient

1 Sections of this chapter were previously published in French as “Préréforme et mysticisme: l'articulation du secret dans la correspondance de Guillaume Briçonnet et Marguerite de Navarre,” in *D'un principe philosophique à un genre littéraire: Les “Secrets,”* ed. Dominique de Courcelles (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), 241–262. The relations between Lefèvre and Erasmus have been explored in Guy Bedouelle, “Introduction to the *Apologia ad fabrum*,” in *Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem*, ed. Guy Bedouelle (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), i–xxvii. On Erasmus, Marguerite de Navarre, and the reformers at Meaux, cf. Lucien Febvre, *Amour sacré, amour profane: autour de l'Heptaméron* (Paris: Gallimard, 1944; reprint, 1996), pp. 68–89. For overviews of Erasmus's relations to French humanist movements, see also Margaret Mann Phillips, “Erasmus in France in the Later Sixteenth Century,” *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971): 246–61 and her work titled *Érasme et les débuts de la réforme française, (1517–1536)* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1978). See especially Jonathan Reid's recent work, *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549)*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 139 ff. Reid makes the important point that these humanist Evangelicals share a common purpose and culture, and he explains how the dissent between Erasmus and French reformers developed. Cf. also Jonathan Reid, “Marguerite de Navarre

and medieval mystical philosophy and by developing extensive meditations on Scripture in general and on Saint Paul in particular. Whereas Chapter 1 explored Erasmus's relations with Origen's thought, this chapter studies numerous sources for Briçonnet's literary thought but focuses on its Augustinian and pseudo-Dionysian backgrounds. The French reformers' interest in medieval mysticism diverged from Erasmus's interest in ancient Greek culture and literature. Nonetheless, they shared a common interest in patristic writings, and through them, they developed comparable doctrines of the human persona and its relation to divine secrets.²

Briçonnet's letters characterize God as ubiquitously present throughout the created world but also as absent from it. In so doing, the Bishop develops the idea that the faithful must engage in a direct relationship with God by turning inwards towards the divine principle that they possess within their souls. Through this idea of secrecy, Briçonnet articulates doctrines that maintain the reputation of orthodoxy, which the French King wished to maintain, but that also register dissent from the Roman Catholic Church.³

The First French Humanist Evangelicals: Historical Backgrounds

Some of the most notable early sixteenth-century humanist Evangelical thinkers were at first university reformers who sought to change the late medieval educational system at the University of Paris. With the arrival of the printing press in 1470, they began by reproducing new editions of philosophical works from antiquity. They later turned to reforming medieval editions of monastic spiritual works and, eventually, as they focused increasingly on Biblical hermeneutics, the Old and New Testaments. They produced France's first Renaissance Latin editions of Saint Paul's epistles, the Gospels and, eventually, the first

and Evangelical Reform," in *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 29–58.

2 On Erasmus and early French humanism, cf. Gérard, Defaux, Marot, Rabelais, Montaigne: *l'écriture comme présence* (Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1987).

3 On the history of scholarship dealing with Marguerite's religious sensibility and exact confessional identity, see Jean Marie le Gall, "The Reasons for Remaining Catholic," in Ferguson and McKinley, *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 59–89. See also Thierry Wanegffelen, *Ni Rome ni Genève: des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1997) and Augustin Renaudet's *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494–1517)*, 2nd ed. (Geneva: Slatkine, 1981). A more recent general historical account of this movement with ample bibliography is provided by Arlette Jouanna's *La France de la Renaissance: histoire et dictionnaire*, ed. Guy Schoeller (Paris: Roberts Lafont, 2001).

French translation of the New Testament, to name but a few of their historically ground-breaking achievements. These French humanists continued, throughout even their later periods, to synthesize ancient and medieval philosophies with Biblical hermeneutics and Evangelism and to articulate their theological views in a variety of literary forms.⁴

Briçonnet used his political and ecclesiastical power to bring this generation of humanist Evangelical thinkers together to pursue reforms in his diocese because of the perceived decadence and corruption that had beset the French Church since the fifteenth century. Many of these thinkers would eventually leave France to become Europe's first generation of Protestant reformers. Known as the Group of Meaux, these French thinkers first began to form in 1507 at the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris and came together later between 1521–1523 in the diocese of Meaux.

When Marguerite de Navarre sought spiritual advice from Briçonnet through an exchange of letters, he agreed to serve as her spiritual advisor. He used their relationship to gain the support of King Francis I; he addressed his letters to Marguerite, knowing that other humanists and the King might well read them and that Francis I had an interest in supporting a French reform movement. In the wake of Luther's initiatives in Germanic territories, it was in Francis I's political interest to support the French reform; to have an Evangelical reform on French soil would provide the King with diplomatic leverage over the Papacy in Rome. The Papacy feared the spread of further ecclesiastical and political dissent in its dominion. The Bishop's letters represent a humanist Evangelical attempt to gain political support for reforming French ecclesiastical and monastic institutions, and they illustrate how mysticism, Evangelism, and critique coalesce in his epistles to Marguerite on the nature of secrecy and divine mystery.

This marked the first time that a member of the French royal family supported a reform based on Evangelical principles, as Guy Bedouelle has observed.⁵ Briçonnet's ability to persuade Marguerite and the King stemmed not only from his experience as a humanist reformer but also as a diplomat for the French court in Rome. As Heller has explained, the King's willingness to create this historically unique alliance—between the French court and the humanist Evangelical reform movement—depended on the weakened position that

4 On the early French Evangelical thinkers and their posterity, see Denis Crouzet, *La genèse de la réforme française: 1520–1560* (Paris: Sedes, 1996).

5 Guy Bedouelle, "Panorama religieux et politique," in *Guillaume Briçonnet et Marguerite de Navarre. Correspondance, 1521–1524*, ed. Christine Martineau, Michel Veissière, and Henry Heller (Geneva: Droz, 1975), 24.

France had gained with respect to the Papacy.⁶ Because Briçonnet's Evangelical and mystical initiatives remained nominally orthodox, Marguerite and Francis I could support his reform without adopting an overtly schismatic position, which allowed them to continue to gain leverage over the Papacy. This potential threat of political and religious dissidence strengthened the French monarchy's negotiating strength.

Humanist, Mystic, Bishop, and Reformer: Briçonnet in the Queen's Service

The Briçonnet family had long-standing political and economic ties to the French monarchy and played an important role in its diplomatic relations with Italy.⁷ Guillaume Briçonnet's role as the central figure in the French reform movement would perpetuate that tradition. Between 1486 and 1507, Briçonnet rose quickly through the political and ecclesiastical ranks; he studied theology in Paris during the humanist reforms that Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples had been initiating since the late fifteenth century.⁸

Briçonnet was named Bishop of Meaux in 1515, where he took up residence in 1517 after his final trip to Italy. According to Veissière, beginning in 1518, his involvement in diplomacy diminished as he occupied himself almost entirely in matters of reform within his diocese. His synodal discourses of 1519 and 1520 show, Veissière has written, that his reforms focused on parish priests and on making the Gospel directly available to the public through preaching.⁹ In the years between 1518 and 1521, Briçonnet gained control of the preaching in his diocese, and he worked to restore authority to the regular clergy and to make Scripture the center of French spiritual life.

6 Henry Heller, "The Briçonnet Case Reconsidered," *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 58 (1972): 255.

7 On Briçonnet's family, see Bernard Chevalier, *Guillaume Briçonnet (v. 1445–1514). Un cardinal-ministre au début de la Renaissance: marchand, financier, homme d'état et homme de l'église* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005).

8 See Michel Veissière, "Guillame Briçonnet et les courants spirituels italiens au début du XVI^e siècle," in *Échanges religieux entre la France et l'Italie du Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne*, ed. M. Maccarrone and A. Vauchez (Geneva: Slatkine, 1987), 215–228. On Lefèvre d'Étaples and Fabrist humanism (so named after Lefèvre, whose name in Latin was Faber), see Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Lefèvre: Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Renewal in France* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984).

9 See Michel Veissière, "L'emploi de l'Écriture sainte par G. Briçonnet, évêque de Meaux entre 1519 et 1524," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 63.3 (1979): 345–363.

In 1521, Briçonnet brought Lefèvre d'Étaples and a group of other Parisian humanist reformers to Meaux to pursue his reforms collectively. This marked the beginnings of the Group of Meaux, which in its first incarnation (from 1521–1523) included Guillaume Farel, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, Gérard Roussel, and François Vatable. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples was the group's philosophical and spiritual leader and France's leading philosopher. He pursued reforms in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris and then turned to the domain of medieval mysticism and Biblical hermeneutics after joining Briçonnet's diocesan reform movement. From the point of view of the history of Christian spirituality, the most historically important texts that the Group of Meaux produced between 1509–1530 include Lefèvre's commentaries on the Psalms (1509), on the epistles of Saint Paul (1512), and on the Gospels (1522), a French translation of the four Gospels (1523), the *Epistres & evangiles pour les cinquante & deux semaines de l'an* (1525), the Catholic Epistles (1527), and the first complete French translation of the Bible in 1530.

The Meaux reformers' Evangelical and Christological beliefs, presented in Lefèvre's landmark preface to his 1522 commentaries on the Gospel, were perceived by the Faculty of Theology at the Sorbonne as particularly subversive to the authority of the Roman Church. France's relations with the Papacy degenerated significantly during the same period in which Marguerite first requested spiritual counsel from Briçonnet.

Secrecy, Immanence, and Transcendence

Briçonnet's mystical theology centers on secrecy, making it a central notion in his correspondence with Marguerite. Like Erasmus, Briçonnet developed a threefold view of the human persona (body, soul, spirit). This is not to say that Briçonnet was Erasmian, but rather that in their different approaches to reform, one can discern points in common regarding spiritual anthropology, in part because they rely on similar sources of thought. For Briçonnet as for Erasmus, spirit enables union between the faithful and the divine, disclosing the secrets of Christian wisdom. Briçonnet, Lefèvre, and Erasmus were some of the first thinkers after Lorenzo Valla to renew the importance of Saint Paul's (and Augustine's) views on flesh and sin. But in contrast with Erasmus's interest in Origen and Saint Paul, French reformers syncretized Saint Paul with pseudo-Dionysian mystical philosophy.

Briçonnet's letters develop a pseudo-Dionysian dialectical opposition between secrecy and openness as a way of describing the divine's simultaneously transcendent and immanent status. Briçonnet saturates his letters with

the pseudo-Dionysian and Cusan views of divine essence as being radically secret, as we see when he writes,

The supercelestial, infinite, gentle, debonnaire, true and only light that blinds and illuminates all creatures that are capable of receiving it, and who, in receiving it, become dignified by the filial adoption of God, wants, Madam, by his excessive and insuperable love to blind and illuminate you, such that you have vision in blindness and blindness in vision, in order to come to the way without a way, of seeing without seeing, knowing without knowing the darkness, in which the divine and infinite light has hidden itself and made its abode.¹⁰

Briçonnet's use of rhetorical tropes here communicates a set of pseudo-Dionysian concepts that serve him to critique human reason's power. Like pseudo-Dionysius, he defines divine reality as secret in the primary sense of being separate, transcending any attachments with the finite world, and paradoxically immanent—that is, intimately hidden in the finite corporeal world.

For Briçonnet, mystical illumination reveals that the human soul and all terrestrial existence contains within it “hidden treasures.” Earthly beings both veil and manifest a divine “superexcellent” light.¹¹ These secret, hidden treasures and this transcendent light represent the soul's immanent dignity. The created world conceals but at the same time discloses the divine essence. Echoing both Lefèvre d'Étaples's mystical theories on the nature of the Trinity and pseudo-Dionysian mysticism, the Bishop writes,

And not only are your creatures lights serving as steps to mystical ecstasy and to raise their spirits to knowledge and love of you, but you have also lodged an inextinguishable and permanent ray of light in each of us for

10 “La superceleste, infinie, douce, debonnaire, vraie et seulle lumiere aveuglant et enluminant toute creature capable de la recevoir et qui, en la recevant, la dignifie de l'adoption filiale de Dieu, vueille, Madame, par son excessive et insuperable amour vous aveugler et illuminer, à ce que soiez en cecité voyante et voiant aveugle, pour parvenir au chemin sans chemin de veoir sans veoir, cognoistre sans cognoistre les tenebres, esquelles la divine lumiere infinie s'est cachée et fait sa demourance.” Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 34 (August, 1521).

11 I discuss the metaphors of vision and blindness in Chapter 3 in relation to Marguerite de Navarre's poetic works, which were inspired by Briçonnet's theology.

the purpose of knowing you. . . . For to know oneself is to know what one is, in you, and without that, self-knowledge would not be possible.¹²

Brignonnet centers his letters on human ignorance and self-knowledge; in his view, created beings are lights leading the human soul to a final absorption in the ecstatic experience of divine secrecy. Paradoxically, in ecstasy the human persona ceases to be the agent of knowledge. It becomes graced with spiritual vision, but it is ultimately God who sees in and through the human persona. Secrecy in this sense refers to the limitations of human reason faced with divine reality. It is God who knows—or metaphorically, who sees—Himself reflected in the human persona as in a mirror.

Secrecy for Brignonnet characterizes divine nature but also relates to theories of divine grace and the human persona.¹³ He develops this alliance of spiritual anthropology and epistolary rhetoric by drawing on Saint Paul, specifically 1 Thessalonians 5:19–23. The Bishop bases his mystical doctrines on the view that the human persona has a threefold structure consisting of body, soul, and spirit. This allows him to attribute a vital function to secrets in developing his spirituality, and he extends the importance of secrecy into different regions of his thought through the literary freedom that the epistolary form affords him. He radicalizes theories of mystical union that Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples had developed in his 1512 commentaries on Saint Paul's distinction between body, soul, and spirit.

According to this mystical anthropology, an infusion of spirit enables Saint Paul to communicate and confer the secret truths of Christian wisdom (*spiritualia*) to his audience. In Lefèvre's words, individuals who have "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16) also have the mind (*mens*) of the Lord and of the Holy Spirit. Lefèvre clarified this theory of mystical language when he wrote that

12 "Et non seulement sont voz creatures lumiere pour estre degréz pour ravir et eslever leurs esperitz à vostre amour et congnoissance, mais en l'esprit de chacun de nous avez logé ung rayon de lumiere inextinguible et permanent pour vous congnoistre. . . . Car se congnoistre est par ce qu'estes en elle et, sans ce, ne se congnoistroit." Brignonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 188–189 (March 6, 1522).

13 Because Brignonnet identifies the "soul" as only one of the parts of the human (along with body and spirit), I use the term "persona" to designate the totality of those three parts. For a recent discussion of spirit in Brignonnet's letters and Marguerite de Navarre's *Chansons Spirituelles*, see Jan Miernowski, "Chansons Spirituelles—Songs for a 'Delightful Transformation,'" in Ferguson and McKinley, *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 249–265.

The mind of the Lord and the mind of Christ are bound by the Holy Spirit. We have the mind of Christ, which is the mind of God and the Holy Spirit. And we speak those things which are infused into us by God, things which are of the spirit of God, not in the words of knowledgeable human learning but in the learned words of the Holy Spirit, which confers spiritual things to spiritual individuals.¹⁴

Brignonnet's letters draw on numerous ancient, medieval metaphors for theoretical vision that Lefèvre d'Etaples developed in his commentaries. The divine Word, the Bishop writes, is a seed (*semence*) that illuminates and thereby "inserts" man into "filiation" with God, through the Holy Spirit as intermediary. Brignonnet also uses the term "understanding" (*entendement*) interchangeably with the word "spirit": God deposits his divine seed (*semence divine*) into human understanding (*... en l'entendement*).¹⁵

For Lefèvre and for Brignonnet, the divine Word acts in the world comparably to a seed sown into the "earth" of the human spirit (*mens*): "The seed is the Word of God. The earth, the good earth, is the good spirit, the good soul. . . ."¹⁶ For both thinkers, the human mind's latent, hidden dignity is the "place" (*habitation, demeure*) where the divine seed develops. Through it, the Holy Spirit infuses the human persona (spirit, soul, and body): "It is true that, just as the body was created capable for life through the presence of the soul, which vivifies it, so too the soul has been created capable and susceptible of receiving such a divine seed. . . ."¹⁷ Brignonnet uses this idea of mystical union as a basis for his critique of the Roman Church's doctrine that justification, or spiritual righteousness, can be merited by human actions. He further uses the metaphor of precious stones to illustrate his understanding of union, when he writes,

14 Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, ed., *S. Pauli Epistolae*, folio 108v.

15 See Lefèvre's commentary on Mark 4:26–29 in Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, *Commentarii initiatorii in qvator Evangelia. In Euangelium secundum Matthaum. In Euangelium secundum Marcum. In Euangelium secundum Lucam. In Euangelium secundum Ioannem* (Basileae: A. Cratandri, 1523), folio 138v.

16 He conceives of its action in terms of the threefold pseudo-Dionysian path of ascent: "The Word of God having been infused into human spirits, it first purges, then illuminates, and finally perfects and consumates. The Father purges, the Son illuminates, the Spirit perfects. . . . Hope purges, faith illuminates, and charity perfects and consumates." Ibid.

17 "Vray est que, comme le corps est créé capable de vie par la venue et presence de l'ame, qui le vivifie, aussy a esté créé capable et susceptible de sy digne semence. . . ." Brignonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 168 (February 26, 1522).

All stones . . . have some quality and particular property: in this supercelestial pearl coincide in actual union all the virtues in excellent perfection and perfect excellence. And, because it is living, infinite virtue communicates itself to all other pearls and stones, to the dead and the material alike, to give them a natural virtue and property. It also gives to living stones that are super-edified in him, according to their capacity and nature. It is a dignified stone that is called “unio” in Latin for good reason, because it is the union of human and divine natures that pacifies the ill will brought about by sin.¹⁸

Here, Briçonnet invokes the philosophical distinction between reason and intellect as a fundamental tenet of his reformist and apologetic thought. He equates intellect with spirit and endows spirit with the capacity to become infused by the Holy Spirit, which discloses the secrets of the Gospel.

Secrecy allows the Bishop to articulate his critique of the institutional, worldly Church on the basis of his spiritual anthropology because it enables him to distinguish between the divine recesses of inner devotional life, on the one hand, and the external practices that he perceived as having corrupted the worldly Church, on the other. For Briçonnet and for Marguerite, the idea of secrecy implies a potential union between the divine aspect of the human persona and its origin or source. Both authors use ancient philosophical and mystical works to help articulate their views of divine grace and how it can both renew and reform the human persona. In Briçonnet's view, the human persona enters a state of internal equality and identity, which he contrasts with unstable human passions that, in his view, lead to the Church's corruption. The action of grace on the human persona releases the devout from the felt need to seek worldly advancement through deceptive means and, as a consequence, to subordinate the Church's mystical unity to the private interests of individuals. Thus, this early French Evangelical humanist discourse differentiates two kinds of secrecy: one being the action of grace on the soul and the other being

18 “Toutes pierres, soient dyamant, amarantes, rubis, balays, saphirs et innombrables ont quelque vertu et particuliere propriété: en ceste superceleste perle coïcident en union actuelle toutes vertus en excellente perfection et parfaicte excellence. Et, par ce qu'elle est vive, vertu infinie se communique à toutes aultres perles et pierres, tant mortes que materielles, pour leur donner vertu et propriété naturelle, que aussy aux vives superedifiées en luy, selon leur capacité et nature. C'est une digne perle qui n'est pour neant apellé en latin ‘unio,’ car c'est l'union de nature divine et humaine, en pacifiant en luy l'inimitié contractée par peché.” Ibid., vol. 1, 56 (November 11, 1521).

the use of dissimulation in society as a means of pursuing and acquiring honors, profits, or pleasures.¹⁹

Secrecy and the Critique of Rationalism

Secrecy allows Briçonnet to critique not only the motives underlying institutional Church practices but also the scholastic, Aristotelian philosophy that dominated French theological schools in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Evangelical reformers renewed patristic and early medieval spiritual texts to provide models for mystical life. They revived devotional models that predated the advent of professionalized theological logic governing academic schools of theology, turning to earlier forms of scholastic inquiry as well as to Neoplatonic models for devotion. I have argued that Briçonnet associated human reasoning with the soul and human intellect with the spirit. By subordinating reason to intellect and spirit and by making spirit the condition of possibility for the soul's rational operations, Briçonnet uses secrecy to redefine the value of human reason. The grounds of reason become secret from reason itself, thus requiring a divine illumination to become knowable.

For both Briçonnet and Lefèvre, the Pauline distinction between soul and spirit corresponds to the philosophical distinction between reason and intellect. In their perspective, Christian contemplation moves beyond the soul's rational, discursive capacities towards a spiritual vision of Christian secrets. Briçonnet writes that there lies hidden in sin "like in a dark prison" an "indissoluble union" with Christ's "filial dignity" in vivifying and illuminating spirit; within the sanctuary of the "divine secret," which is "dark and inaccessible," there remains that transcendent light, always identical to itself.²⁰

Briçonnet meditates on the difference between reason and intellect in terms of the opposition between sin and grace. Intellect has the potential for rebirth, which reveals the secret dignity underlying reason's capacities. Rational inquiry must, for Briçonnet as for Lefèvre, be subordinate to spiritual knowledge that is attained through faith: "He who only progresses through reason is not a Christian—Christians live only through spirit, above reason. Reason is nothing but the light of a candle by comparison with the light of the sun, which

19 For a recent discussion of dissimulation and secrecy in the early modern period, see Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

20 Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 2, 55 (July 21, 1523).

is spirit. . . .”²¹ The Bishop develops this idea principally through his exegesis of two Pauline and Johannine verses: “Animal man, that is to say rational man, cannot know and perceive what God is [1 Cor. 2:14]. . . . God is spirit: ‘Deus spiritus est’ [John 4:24].”²² Because human reason is incapable of knowing itself, it requires conversion through illumination.

For these reasons, true self-knowledge for Briçonnet cannot be achieved by rational means. Philosophical reasoning derives from the knowledge that God grants to man, but this reasoning fails to recognize the conditions of its own possibility. Briçonnet views man’s rational soul as having lost its prelapsarian unity with spirit. In this light, he associates philosophical reasoning with the reference in Genesis to man as a living soul (*âme vivante*).²³ This allows him to speculate that before the fall, man had a “living soul . . . [that was] illuminated and clear, for the light is nothing other than life, and life is nothing other than light. . . .”²⁴ Human rationality was identical to spirit in man’s prelapsarian state, but it became separate through moral corruption, falling into a natural and animal condition (*naturelle et animale*). Human rationality no longer lived in agreement with spirit “to attain . . . the purpose of vivifying spiritual life.”²⁵

21 “Qui ne chemine que par raison n’est chrestien, lequel ne vit que par l’esperit sur la raison. Laquelle n’est que la lumiere de la chandelle en regard à celle du soleil, qui est l’esperit. . . .” Ibid., vol. 1, 225 (November, 1522).

22 “A ceste cause dict saint Pol: ‘Animalis homo non percipit quae Dei sunt.’ [1 Cor. 2:14] L’homme animal, c’est à dire raisonnable, ne peult congnoistre et percevoir ce qui est de Dieu, le royaume duquel est hors ce monde: ‘Regnum meum (inquit Jhesus) non est de hoc mundo.’ [1 John 18:36]” Ibid., vol. 2, 17 (November, 1522).

23 The *Glossa ordinaria* makes the connection with Augustine. “The LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.” The final word here, “being,” refers to the soul in Briçonnet’s understanding of this verse. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 13. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:45: “Thus it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being’ the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 290. Bedouelle discusses this in Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 2, 32, n. 13.

24 Man’s soul was, he writes, a “living soul . . . illuminated and clear, for light is nothing other than life, and life nothing other than light. . . .” (“ame vivante illuminée et clere, car aultre chose n’est lumiere que vie et vie lumiere. . . .”) Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 2, 54 (July 21, 1523).

25 In his commentaries on 2 Cor. 7, Lefèvre d’Etaples identifies *homo animalis* with those who do not grasp or understand the spiritual things of God. The apostles, he writes, have the spirit, or *mens*, of Christ infused (*indulta*) within them. The term “animal man” derives, according to Lefèvre, not from the Latin term *animalis* but from *anima*, which he associates with *ratio*. He writes, “And because the soul and reason are one in man; man is

For Briçonnet, secrecy relates to the way reason cannot know its condition of possibility. Reason must become reabsorbed into its origins, which are disclosed through the revelations of spirit and grace. Briçonnet uses secrecy to assert the soul's hidden and divine dignity. Using mirror metaphors that Briçonnet later adapts, Marguerite writes that divine "discipline" punishes man in order to clean his soul, and so that God

... can gaze at himself in the mirror without obstacles, He who is the truly and only beautiful one, alone is he pleasant to see. When he sees himself in his creation (*ouvrage*) that he has cleaned and purged, and in which he finds only his own proper image, he pleases and delights himself and loves his creation, in which he recognizes himself. . . . He will render you susceptible to become like him, as he gazes at himself in you, and seeing his virtues in you. . . .²⁶

This Evangelically inspired image of the mirror becomes central to Marguerite's devotional poems. We have seen that contemplative wisdom transcends but also depends on rational inquiry and that rational inquiry seeks out truths that are initially disclosed through the revelations of Scripture. This revelation does not negate reason's value but rather unveils its underlying dignity. It is, in sum, a form of self-awareness and Christian self-knowledge represented by the image of the mirror.

Body, Soul, and Spirit in Briçonnet's Humanist Evangelical Thought

How does Briçonnet's tripartite doctrine of the human persona allow him to develop the importance of secrecy? His Evangelism provides insight into the way early modern humanist Evangelical thinkers used the idea of secrecy as they revived Saint Paul's thoughts on divine mystery. This Pauline anthropological model in particular—according to which the human persona consists

rational, but he does not attain the mysteries and secrets of God through reason. Reason is foolish with regard to those things." Lefèvre d'Étaples, *S. Pauli Epistolae*, folio 109r.

- 26 " . . . affin que sans obstacle s'y puisse veoir celluy qui est le vray très-beau et seul beau et plaisant de face. Lequel se voyant en son ouvraige que tant de fois a nettoié et purgé sans y trouver aultre ymaige que la sciencie propre, se plaist et delecte et ayme en sa facture, en laquelle par luy se reconnoist. O que bien-eureuse vous sera la maladie qui . . . vous rendra susceptible de luy se mirant en vous et voyant en vous ses vertuz." Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 2, 63 (October 4, 1523).

of body, soul, and spirit—enables Briçonnet to subordinate but also to assimilate rational knowledge to Christian faith. He argues that reason unknowingly participates in the essence of spirit. The rational soul can be renewed by the divine “light” that continues to animate it secretly from within, shining like a dimmed lantern but always able to become reanimated by the life-spirit’s (*esperit de vie*) divine seed (*semence*).²⁷ The “spirit of life” renews reason (*âme*) and sense (*corps*); God is “the true light” that hides itself “through grace so that the soul may illuminate the body.”²⁸ After the Savior’s revelation and resurrection, the Word of God remains present and active in the world, but in occulted and secret ways. This Word protects the workings of divine Spirit from those who would misunderstand it, and it dignifies man by restoring him in the image of the divine.

Briçonnet understands divine grace as needing to act secretly to be efficacious. Grace acts secretly to convert humanity but also to remain separate from the profane world’s corruption. It converts by transforming man’s will over time rather than by an immediate decree of divine justice. Briçonnet’s Pauline spiritual psychology thus draws on the idea of secrecy within a temporal dialectic: secrecy refers to a movement away from body and reason towards spirit, which reveals the dignity that underlies not only human reason but all creation as well. As with pseudo-Dionysius, Nicholas of Cusa, and Lefèvre before him, Briçonnet conceives of all the varying degrees of intelligibility within the human persona (body, soul, and spirit) as deriving from one divine source of intelligibility. That source represents the condition for all knowing. He theorizes that through the union of spirits, a gift of grace infuses the human persona, revealing that God’s knowledge remains secret except to Himself.

Secrecy for Briçonnet implies the immediately present but paradoxically hidden presence of the divine within all acts of cognition. To explain this, he uses pseudo-Dionysius’s and Cusa’s terms for describing Trinitarian, hypostatic union: “...Given that He is super-eminently lodged in all understanding and substance, He is not known truthfully; and if He is not so known, He is nonetheless super-substantially known in all acts of understanding and intelligence”²⁹ Also an Augustinian theme, the secret presence of the divine renders the rational soul unknowable to itself, and it renders the source of its own intelligibility inaccessible:

27 Ibid., vol. 2, 55 (July 21, 1523).

28 Ibid., 55.

29 “...car actendu qu’il est supereminement logé sur tout entendement et substance, pour verité il n’est point congneu; et sy n’est point, et toutesfois est supersustancialement et sur tout entendement et intelligence congneu.” Ibid., vol. 2, 42 (June 18, 1523).

If human understanding does not understand how the infinite and inextinguishable light can not only be obscured but also darkness, let us praise the fountain of paternal light which has hidden its incommunicable treasures in earthen vessels, shining in their hearts through an unknown illumination, in order that they incomprehensibly understand the incomprehensibility of filial light. Because that light is inextinguishable in those who have received it through filiation, it blinds malicious infidelity that leads itself astray and does not receive the Evangelical word illuminating the world.³⁰

Reason is, in this sense, always exterior to its own arcane sources. Briçonnet inspires himself directly from pseudo-Dionysius's works when he writes that God alone possesses being:

...there are no creatures that have the power to express and to know what they themselves are. For of themselves they are nothing, which cannot be expressed, because expression presupposes being, and if they were to express their being, it would be to express God's being which is in them, and by which they subsist, which is impossible.³¹

In Briçonnet's understanding of knowing ignorance, reason remains exterior to its condition of possibility and secrecy functions in the dialectic between immanence and transcendence. He writes that God is Himself his knowledge: "If the light can only be seen through and in the light, then God can only be known in and through God himself. One must be God in order to know God,

30 "Sy l'entendement humain ne comprend point comme la lumiere infinie et, par ce, inextinguible peult estre non seulement obscurée mais tenebres, moult est à louer la fontaine et paternelle lumiere qui son invisible et incommunicable tresor a caché es vaisseau fictiles, luisant en leurs coeurs par illumination incongneue, pour incomprehensiblement comprendre l'incomprehensibilité de la lumiere filiale. Laquelle, comme est inextinguible en ceulx qui par filiation l'ont receue aussy est aveuglant infidelité par malice se distrahande et ne recepvant la parole evangelicque illuminant le monde." *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 54 (July 21, 1523).

31 "Luy seul ouvre l'huis à ceulx qui y hurtent. Aultre que luy n'a le pover, car il n'est creatures qui aient pover d'exprimer et donner à cognoistre ce qu'elles sont. Car de soy elles sont rien qui ne se peult exprimer, car expression presuppose l'estre et s'elles exprimoient leur estre ce seroit exprimer l'estre de Dieu, qui est en elles, par lequel elles subsistent: ce qui est impossible." *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 78 (December 22, 1521).

because God is, as it is said, his own knowledge.³² Briçonnet thus develops his spiritual anthropology through a literary critique of the scholastic reasoning that governed the theology schools of the Sorbonne in Paris. These critiques had been developed by Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Group of Meaux under the Bishop's own political and spiritual guidance, and they became articulated for the first time in the French vernacular in his epistles to Marguerite. He draws on Saint Paul's division of the human persona into body, soul, and spirit to represent divine Spirit entering a dynamic threefold worldly structure that serves to renew and reform both the individual and the body of the faithful as a whole.

Pseudo-Dionysian Secrecy in French Humanist Evangelical Discourse

The epistolary genre's familiar tone sets the stage for an exploration of secrecy that serves to denounce passions and intentions that, in Briçonnet's view, lead to abusive institutional Church practices. Thus far, I have discussed Briçonnet's spiritual anthropology by focusing on the way he represents the soul's secret, divine dignity. This representation enables Briçonnet to resituate the value of human reason. Here, I consider how Briçonnet redefines the human persona through spiritual and epistemological considerations about the soul's different modes and objects of apprehension. In so doing, he transposes the theological innovations that he and the Group of Meaux pioneered into a vernacular, more accessible literary form. The eclecticism and the intimacy of epistolary correspondence allow the Bishop to invoke and explore secrecy from several different theological perspectives.³³

32 "Il est luy mesmes sa congnoissance. . . . Sy lumiere ne peult que par lumiere et en lumiere estre veue, moins Dieu ne peult que par Dieu et en Dieu estre congneu. Dieu fault estre qui Dieu congnoist, estant Dieu, comme dict est, sa congnoissance." Ibid., vol. 2, 41–43 (June 18, 1523).

33 This methodological approach is based on two considerations. The first corresponds to the basic scholastic method of correlating the soul's faculties to the objects they perceive and defining the disciplines according to the differences between those objects. This is the basic model governing Lefèvre's thought. The second consideration, which complements the first, is the idea that Briçonnet's letters represent a shifting conception of the self, the disciplines, and forms of address. On humanist relocations of inquiry, see Nancy Struener, *Theory as Practice: Ethical Inquiry in the Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 1–56.

Briçonnet uses diverse rhetorical strategies to illustrate secrecy's spiritual implications. His style's opacity invites readers to contemplate divine essence as being secret in the sense that it is simultaneously immanent and transcendent. He constructs a contemplative, mystical discourse that has precedents in the Bible as well as in Augustinian and pseudo-Dionysian theologies that, along with the Old Testament and the Gospel, represent the most important sources for Briçonnet's epistolary discourse. In pseudo-Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy*, divine reality's secret nature partially discloses itself through the dialectical operation of Biblical and liturgical symbols in the hierarchical structure. Symbols have a twofold function in the hierarchy. On the one hand, they hide the true nature of divine truth from the profane "crowds," protecting the symbols from those who falsely believe that they can understand, without the mediation of spiritual hierarchy, the symbols or the secrets for which they stand in. On the other hand, the symbols help the faithful to attain the divine because they reveal secret realities in a manner that accommodates them to the limitations of human knowledge. Because humans are limited in their ability to perceive secret and intelligible truths, they need symbols to contemplate them. Thus, immaterial hierarchies are presented to us, as pseudo-Dionysius writes in the *Celestial Hierarchy*,

... in numerous material figures and forms so that, in a way appropriate to our nature, we might be uplifted from these most venerable images to interpretations and assimilations which are simple and inexpressible (*tas apas kai atupotous*). For it is quite impossible that we humans should, in any immaterial way, rise up to imitate and to contemplate the heavenly hierarchies without the aid of those material means capable of guiding us as our nature require.³⁴

Pseudo-Dionysius proposes that divine truths accommodate themselves to human capacities in Biblical symbols, which he explains with his notion of "poetic fictions":

The Word of God makes use of poetic imagery when discussing these formless intelligences (*epi ton askematiston noon*) but, as I have already said, it does so not for the sake of art, but as a concession to the nature of our own mind. It uses scriptural passages in an uplifting fashion as a way,

34 CH 2, 121C. I abbreviate pseudo-Dionysius's works as follows: CH=Celestial Hierarchy; MT=Mystical Theology; EH=Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. These references refer to *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibhéid and Paul Rorem (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

provided for us from the first, to uplift our mind in a manner suitable to our nature.³⁵

The veil of Biblical symbols raises the human through spiritual hierarchy towards truths that are described as secret, simple, and “formless.” At the same time, Biblical symbols protect those truths from the crowds (*hoi polloi*), who falsely believe these symbols are sensible forms and are accessible to human, sensible apprehension.

As Paul Rorem has shown, pseudo-Dionysius articulates the way these two symbolic functions relate to divine secrets in the following passage:

Now there are two reasons for creating types for the typeless, for giving shape to what is actually without shape (*ton atupoton oi tupoin kai ta skemata ton askematiston*). First, we lack the ability to be directly raised up to conceptual contemplations. We need our own upliftings that come naturally to us and which can raise before us the permitted forms of the marvelous and unformed sights. Second, it is most fitting to the mysterious passages of scripture that the sacred and hidden truth about the celestial intelligences be concealed through the inexpressible and the sacred and be inaccessible to the *hoi polloi*. Not everyone is sacred, and, as scripture says, *knowledge is not for everyone*.³⁶

This passage serves as the basis for pseudo-Dionysius’s theory of similar and dissimilar signs, according to which divine truths can become revealed in divergent ways, but most effectively and appropriately through the use of dissimilar signs. In this dialectical theory of secrecy and openness, literary symbols accommodate human reason’s limits by presenting divine secrets in material form. Even as they disclose divine truths, however, these symbols also paradoxically veil and protect the “secret” divinity. Secrecy also protects the celestial spirits that participate directly in the divinity’s secret nature (*kruphian town uperkosmion noon aletheian*).³⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius develops this doctrine

35 CH 2, 137A–B.

36 Ibid., 140A. The Biblical reference in italics refers to 1 Cor. 8:7; Mt. 13, 11; Lk. 8:10. See also EH 1, 376C 34 ff.

37 On the term *kruphian*, its semantic opposite *phaneros*, and their relation to the term *mysterion* in ancient Greek religions and tragedy, see Luther H. Martin, “Secrecy in Hellenistic Religious Communities,” in *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, ed. Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa (Leiden-New York-Köln: Brill, 1995), esp. 108–112. See also the article *krupto* in volume III

of similar and dissimilar signs to explain the double function of sacred symbols: to both protect but also to manifest the secrets of Christian wisdom.

Brignonnet develops Lefèvre's synthesis of rational investigation and contemplative mysticism by making Pauline and pseudo-Dionysian anthropologies central to his Evangelical reform ideology. Lefèvre's 1522 commentaries on Saint Matthew take secrecy to mean the mysteries behind the Gospel. In those commentaries, he explains pseudo-Dionysius's theory of similar and dissimilar signs, situating his discussion in relation to a theory of metaphor and of the need for secrecy to protect against human vice. He refers to the *Celestial Hierarchy's* fourth chapter, which situates divine secrets in opposition to inane glory and opposes the figure of the veil (*velamen*) to openness and transparency. In the same passage, Lefèvre uses the word *mysterium* to designate the sacrosanct nature of hierarchical ordinations and virtues.³⁸

In pseudo-Dionysius's writings, terms such as "figureless" (*atupon*), formlessness (*askematon*), and simplicity all designate the transcendent, secret reality that similar and dissimilar signs serve to reveal.³⁹ Brignonnet's rhetoric adapts these negative locutions and turns them into tropes that refer to the two pseudo-Dionysian "modes" (similar and dissimilar) of signifying divine secrets. The Bishop's tropes have a double significance because they condense the two types of literary and symbolic discourses that pseudo-Dionysius distinguishes in his theory of poetic fictions. Brignonnet uses rhetorical tropes to signify the simultaneous possibility and impossibility of representing divine essence in language.

Secrecy in Plotinian, Augustinian, and Cusan Thought

Brignonnet makes extensive use of rhetorical figures (oxymorons, paradoxes, and inversions) to adapt and renew ancient theological methods of contemplation. These contemplative methods presuppose the secret, formless (figureless, *atupon*) presence of a divine essence within all created and worldly forms of being. For example, Brignonnet writes,

The excellent and salutary abyss draws all creatures into the abyss through grace, without ceasing the flow of its abyssal charity in torrents

of Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 957–1000.

38 Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Commentarii initiatorii*, folio 34.

39 CH, 2, 136C–145C.

of delight. It brings death and fulfills truly annihilated souls, and through harmony of love He unites pure, empty and impoverished souls to Him. Those who voluntarily render themselves susceptible to Him, liquify their hearts in the gentle cauldron that purges them . . . in Him, who is the abyss of water, of fire and of spiritual nourishment.⁴⁰

In this passage, Briçonnet uses imagery drawn from the book of Genesis's description of the deep (abyss) before creation. He explains how divine grace enters human spirits that have humbled themselves through self-abasement. Briçonnet teaches Marguerite that the divine source (abyss) of charitable love enters self-mortified (annihilated) souls and those who have embraced their spiritual indigence (also an abyss), rendering themselves receptive to the salutary waters of spiritual doctrine. Briçonnet intensifies this rhetoric as he further writes,

The divine abyss precedes all other abysses, in order to annihilate them without annihilating them in a divine abyss, such that they not become abysses; the divine abyss is an abyss that has depth without depth (*fons sans fons*). It is the path of errants who have no path or way, who have been led astray in error so that they become lost in the abyss, in the path of the abyss, abysmally erring in their way. But the more they err, the less they err. Errancy is the path, and the path is errancy leading to the port of safety. . . . Then shall the soul's sterility receive plenitude in the beauty of the desired desiring one, through knowledge of true self-annihilation, which is the path without a path and the light without a light, leading us to attain it. . . .⁴¹

40 "L'excellent et beneficque abisme qui toutes creatures abisme en soy par grace sans intermission fluentes de son abissale charité en torrent de volupté abrevant, letifiant et remplissant les ames vrayement aneantyes et par harmonie d'amour uniez à luy en pureté de vaisseau vidé et appauvry. Lesquelles s'en rendent par volontaire abesement susceptibles, liquefians leurs coeurs au doux brasier qui les purge, illumine et parfait . . . en luy, qui est abisme de eaue, de feu et pasture." Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 76 (December 22, 1521).

41 "L'abisme qui tout abisme previent pour en le desabismant l'abismer en abisme sans l'abismer, auquel abisme et fons sans fons, voie des errans sans chemin ne sentier, qui les desvoiez retire d'erreur pour abissalement les desvoier en voie abissale, abissablement desvoiant, et plus desvoie moins desvoie. Esgarement est voie et voye menant au port, auquel sont plus arrestéz, plus s'esgarent et errent sans erreur. . . . Lors sa sterilité s'engressera en la beaulté du désiré desirant, par congnoissance du vray aneantissement, qui est la voie sans voie et lumiere sans lumiere, pour y parvenir. . . ." Ibid., vol. 1, 134 (January 20, 1522).

Through an exegetical meditation on Psalm 42:8 (*abissus invocat abissus*), Briçonnet suggests that by confessing one's sin (or abyss of moral corruption), one opens oneself to receiving the secret sources (or abyss) of divine grace that lie dormant beneath the surface of the soul's corrupted nature.⁴² Although opposites, human sin and divine grace are both abysses; they coincide when the soul becomes oblivious to the world. These two sides of secrecy continue to have importance for Marguerite's works, through the two kinds of Augustinian secrecy that nourish her devotional poems.

This mystical philosophy and its accompanying rhetoric have its roots in Plotinus, who was an important source for both pseudo-Dionysian and Augustinian methods of contemplation. Plotinus's supreme reality (the Good) engenders created forms while remaining formless (*amorphos*) and transcendent. Plotinus conceives of the Good as secret in the dialectical sense that it is entirely separate from created matter but also mysteriously present and perceptible within it. For Plotinus, the divinity is boundless; it has no limit, no measure, and no figure. This formless or figureless God is, for Plotinus, the principle and measure of all things, but it remains simultaneously detached from the created world.⁴³ In this perspective, the transcendent Good relates to

42 Hereafter, I no longer use the word "soul" to refer to its definition in Thessalonians and its interpreters. I use it in a general sense.

43 "This produced reality is an Ideal-form—for certainly nothing springing from the Supreme can be less—and it is not a particular form but the form of all, beside which there is no other; it follows that The First must be without form, and, if without form, then it is no Being; Being must have some definition and therefore be limited; but the First cannot be thought of as having definition and limit, for thus it would be not the Source but the particular item indicated by the definition assigned to it. If all things belong to the produced, which of them can be thought of as the Supreme? Not included among them, this can be described only as transcending them: but there are Being and the Beings; it therefore transcends Being. Note that the phrase 'transcending Being' assigns no character, makes no assertion, allots no name, carries only the denial of a particular being; and in this there is no attempt to circumscribe it: to seek to throw a line about that illimitable Nature would be folly, and anyone thinking to do so cuts himself off from any slightest and most momentary approach to its least vestige. As one wishing to contemplate the Intellectual Nature will lay aside all the representations of sense and so may see what transcends the sense-realm, in the same way one wishing to contemplate what transcends the Intellectual attains by putting away all that is of the intellect, taught by the intellect, no doubt, that the Transcendent exists but never seeking to define it. Its definition, in fact, could be only 'the indefinable': what is not a thing is not some definite thing. We are in agony for a true expression; we are talking of the untellable; we name, only to indicate for our own use as best we may. And this name, The One, contains really no more than the negation of plurality..." Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna

worldly forms in the same way that divine, infinite (*apeiros*, 36, 19–20) light relates to the finite objects that it illuminates. The Good, in its formless infinity, creates a dialectical movement in the human soul that is metaphorically described as erotic: like a lover's search for his or her beloved, the human soul desires and seeks the infinite Good but can never attain it so long as the soul remains attached to worldly forms. Love for God moves the soul to perpetually search for Him, but it never finds the object of its desire in any created, finite form, because the Good is simultaneously present in all things yet also mysteriously absent from all creation.

In this Neoplatonic idea of secrecy, the soul desires a hidden and formless infinity that is secretly present everywhere yet nowhere to be found. The soul's search in this erotic and philosophical movement leads it to transcend finite being and to arrive at a mystical vision of the light itself. In such contemplative vision, the soul comes to exist "in" the divine Intellect. But it is not truly the human soul that perceives the divine Intellect. Rather, the Intellect thinks itself through the medium of the human soul. The light of intelligibility becomes perfectly self-reflexive in what Plotinus calls the act of "seeing without seeing." This Plotinian theory of intellection corresponds to the philosophical premises underlying Brignonnet's Pauline anthropology, according to which God apprehends Himself in the human soul's divine spark as in a mirror.

Brignonnet's theory represents a literary meditation on the Plotinian principle that one must learn to see the spiritual world within the human soul. In so doing, such vision transforms its perception of external nature. Through contemplation, the soul exists "in" the divine Intellect as it thinks itself.⁴⁴ Brignonnet's underlying doctrines stem from the Plotinian and Cusan conceptions of vision as a mystical union between the interior and exterior light, in which what is seen becomes the agent of sight as the light of intelligibility becomes perfectly self-reflexive, "seeing without seeing."⁴⁵ To achieve such union, the soul must itself become formless like the light of divine Spirit. It must leave the sphere of affirmation and addition and pass into what exists beyond all thought and created being. This beyond is called a "desert" because nothing exists there. Moreover, anything that is added to the beyond paradoxically only diminishes its purity because it does not need anything.⁴⁶ The soul

(Burdett, New York: Published for the Paul Brunton Philosophic Foundation by Larson Publications, 1992), 469 ff.

44 Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* v, 3, 6, 5.12 and Pierre Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

45 Cf. v 5, 7, 23 and Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard*, 104.

46 Plotinus, *Enneads*, vi, 7, 41, 14–17.

must become like the desert—arid, deserted, and empty—before it can renew itself in the plenitude of intellection. It must die such that it may be reborn in Spirit.

Augustinian Secrets

Plotinus's idea of the Good's formlessness became fundamental for Saint Augustine, who understood divine secrecy dialectically through the relations of immanence to transcendence, finitude to infinity. Augustine drew extensively on rhetoric to represent the problems involved in searching for an absolutely transcendent God that is mysteriously present in creation. Augustine read Plotinus and, in his *Confessions*, reformulated the idea of an unknowable, transcendent God who secretly hides and acts in the depths of the human heart. God is "most hidden, yet intimately present" (*secretissime et praesentissime*) and "more secret than is any intimacy" (*omni secreto interior*).⁴⁷ For Augustine, God is secret in two senses: he is separated from creation by an infinite gulf, and he is secretly hidden within the opacity of every individual's subjectivity.⁴⁸ God is, for Augustine, secret in His transcendence and in His immanence.

In his *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine speculates on divine secrecy through an exegetical interpretation of Wisdom 11:21 in ways that had a profound

47 Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. O.S.A. John E. Rotelle, trans. O.S.B. Maria Boulding, 1.4.4; 9.1.1. I discuss this Augustinian background in further detail in Chapter 3.

48 "O God, most high, most deep, and yet nearer than all else, most hidden yet intimately present, you are not framed of greater and lesser limbs; you are everywhere, whole and entire in every place, but confined to none. In no sense is our bodily form to be attributed to you, yet you have made us in your own image, and lo! Here we are, from head to foot set in our place!" Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, 6.3.4. Cf. *City of God*, ed. Phillip Schaff (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 1.29: "... our God is everywhere present, wholly everywhere; not confined to any place. He can be present unperceived, and be absent without moving" (*deus meus ubique praesens, ubique totus, nusquam inclusus, qui possit adesse secretus, abesse non motus*). God is, here, in agreement with both Plotinian and pseudo-Dionysian thought, present and absent because he is *ubique totus*, all in all and yet nowhere. On the secret in Augustine, a term that appears numerous times throughout the *Confessions*, cf. Paul-Augustin Deproost, "Au-delà de l'énigme, la béance de Dieu. Secret et intériorité dans les *Confessions* de Saint Augustin," in *Le secret: motif et moteur de la littérature*, ed. Chantal Zabus (Louvain-la-Neuve: Collège Érasme, Bureau du Recueil, 1999), 37–62. For further discussion of God as far and near in humanist Evangelical spirituality, see Chapter 3.

influence on humanist Evangelicals.⁴⁹ Augustine uses this verse in Wisdom to develop his rhetorical method to describe the mystery uniting created forms and their divine origin. He combines Plotinian rhetorical figures designating God as secret and mysterious, acting in and through grace in the world, and maintaining simultaneous presence and absence in and from the material world. As I show further below, Augustine's alliance of Christian rhetoric with philosophy serves, along with pseudo-Dionysian aesthetics, as an important literary model for Briçonnet's correspondence with Marguerite de Navarre. Although pseudo-Dionysian theology remains fundamental throughout Briçonnet's letters, the Bishop's project can also be described by referring to an Augustinian rhetorical culture, as Reinier Leushuis has recently observed.⁵⁰ As Augustine questions whether forms existed before the world's genesis, he asks "...if they existed beforehand, where were they? After all, before creation there was nothing except the creator. Therefore they were in him. But how? ... God, after all, is neither measure nor number nor weight, nor all of them together." This God transcends "all that can be measured... numbered... weighed..."⁵¹ For Augustine, because God absolutely transcends the created forms of worldly beings, man must search for God by negating worldly forms, as we see when Augustine writes that God is measure without measure, number without number, and weight without weight (*mensura sine mensura, numerus sine numero, pondus sine pondere*).⁵² With these expressions,

49 "You have arranged all things by measure and number and weight." *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 85.

50 See Reinier Leushuis's recent essay on Marguerite's correspondence with Briçonnet, titled "Spiritual Dialogues and Politics in the Correspondence between Marguerite de Navarre and Guillaume Briçonnet (1521–1524)," in *Between Scylla and Charybdis: Learned Letter Writers Navigating the Reefs of Religious and Political Controversy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jeanine de Landtsheer and Henk J.M. Nellen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 17–34.

51 Augustine, *On The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill, 247.

52 Augustine writes, "It is a great thing, a concession granted to few, to soar beyond everything that can be measured and see measure without measure, to soar beyond everything that can be numbered and see number without number, to soar beyond everything that can be weighed and see weight without weight. ... But the measure without measure is the standard for what derives from it, while it does not itself derive from anything else; the number without number, by which all things are formed, is not formed itself; the weight without weight to which are drawn, in order to rest there, those whose rest is pure joy is not itself drawn to anything else beyond it. But if you only know the words 'measure' and 'number' and 'weight' with reference to visibile objects, you have a slave's knowledge of them." Ibid. Cf. James McEnvoy, "Biblical and Platonic Measure," in *Eriugena: East and West. Papers of the Eighth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies Chicago and Notre Dame 18–20 October 1991*, ed. Bernard McGinn and

Augustine establishes the basis for a contemplative mode that consists of simultaneously asserting God's absence and presence in worldly forms.

These rhetorical formulations underscore the secrecy of divine essence. It remains secret because of human reason's inability to contemplate the relation between created forms and the Godhead. Briçonnet's rhetoric and speculations on secrecy are directly inspired by Augustine's theological and rhetorical interpretations of Wisdom 11:21.⁵³ For Briçonnet, this rhetorical and contemplative method initiates a process of questioning that represents the soul's need to rise above corporeal forms to attain the spiritual meaning of creation.

There are intermediate sources through which Augustine's thought filtered into Briçonnet's letters to Marguerite. Although Augustine and pseudo-Dionysius represent the ultimate source for Briçonnet's reformist rhetoric, the great theologian Nicholas of Cusa is arguably Briçonnet's more proximate source. For Cusa, God is secret in the sense that He is infinite (*infinitus*) and absolute (*absolutus*), separate from all created things, encompassing all ends, without any limit, and thus constitutes the absolute measure of all created forms. Cusa was himself inspired by this Augustinian tradition. Briçonnet read Cusa's works in the first complete edition that the Group of Meaux edited in 1514 and dedicated to Denis Briçonnet, Guillaume's brother.

In that edition, Briçonnet and Marguerite discovered highly speculative mystical reflections on the idea of God's total separation from creation, on his secrecy in the sense in which I have been discussing it. Drawing on Genesis, Cusa describes this separation as the wall of a garden (a *locus classicus* for the topic of secrecy) that delimits the domain of human reason—a domain governed by the law of non-contradiction—from the domain of the intellect, which can accede to a vision beyond the wall to reveal the "secret love" and the "hidden treasures" that transcend and simultaneously remain immanent in all created forms. Following pseudo-Dionysius, Cusa also describes the divine as a

Willemien Otten (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 153–178. For a brief general and illuminating discussion of its significance in the early Middle Ages, see Henri Pouillon, "Le premier traité des propriétés transcendentes," *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie* 42 (1939): 40–77. No other studies of the history of Wisdom 11:21 in the philosophical tradition exist, to my knowledge.

- 53 As we see, for example, in the same passage: "For who is Lord but the Lord? Or who is God save our God? Most highest, most good, most potent, most omnipotent; most merciful, yet most just; most hidden, yet most present; most beautiful, yet most strong, stable, yet incomprehensible; unchangeable, yet all-changing; never new, never old; all-renewing, and bringing age upon the proud, and they know it not; ever working, ever at rest; still gathering, yet nothing lacking; supporting, filling, and overspreading; creating, nourishing, and maturing; seeking, yet having all things." Augustine, *The Confessions*, 1.4.4.

coincidence of contradictions, of a contradiction without contradiction (*contradictio sine contradictione*), an alterity without alterity (*alteritas . . . sine alteritate*). Nonetheless, intellectual vision leads beyond these paradoxes to an ineffable experience of the infinite, in which

... the wall is the limit of the power of every intellect, although the eye looks beyond the wall into Paradise. But that which the eye sees, it can neither speak of nor understand. For it is the eye's secret love and hidden treasure, which, having been found, remains hidden. For it is found on the inner side of the wall of the coincidence of the hidden and the manifest.⁵⁴

This secret love is immanent in all acts of intelligibility, although the soul's lower faculties cannot become aware of themselves as manifestations of divine knowledge. It requires an act of faith and intellection to recognize that all forms of knowledge emanate in varying degrees of intensity from one self-same source in the Godhead. For Cusa, as for Saint Augustine, God dwells in a region of the soul that is unattainable by reason.

Brignonnet draws on the discursive strategies that Plotinus, Augustine, and Cusa had used to embed their theological ideas in literary form. Through his style as much as through his content, Brignonnet makes secrecy central to spiritual life. In his view, God's secrets (*secretz de Dieu*, 2 Cor. 12:4) must be the center of spiritual experience. As I showed in Chapter 1, the idea of secrecy set forth in 2 Cor. 12:4 is vitally important to Erasmus's psychology and rhetoric as well. For Brignonnet, the divine mystery remains secret, that is to say ineffable, because man does not possess the faculties needed to attain and express that mystery. Brignonnet additionally uses pseudo-Dionysius's *Divine Names* to explain linguistic predication and mystical contemplation. He writes that Saint Paul's words in 2 Cor. 12:4 (*Vidi archana Dei que non licet homini loqui*) do not refer to a social prohibition against secrecy. Rather, Brignonnet interprets Paul as referring to the impossibility of revealing divine mysteries, because expression and speech relate "only to what man understands, and man is less able to understand divine incomprehensibility than animals can understand man."⁵⁵ The Bishop thus underlines that secrecy is not a prohibition but rather an incapability. Man remains incapable of expressing divine secrets because human language can only refer to objects of sensible and rational experience.

54 Nicholas of Cusa, *De visione Dei*, in *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism*, trans. Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985), 209 (78, 22–25).

55 Brignonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 141 (February 5, 1522).

For Briçonnet, mysteries are not merely concealed, they are ineffable; their secrecy encompasses all men in one universal Christian cult.⁵⁶ If the idea of mystery (*mysterion*, *secretum*) could be appropriated, then it could become a source of divisiveness and potentially heretical religious, social, and political distinctions. Briçonnet's notion of secrecy agrees with the prevalent meaning that the early Christian tradition attributes to it, as something that remains hidden yet paradoxically declares itself universally.⁵⁷ Divine secrets declare themselves equally to all, but the limits of human reason and language constrain man to ignorance and silence. Marguerite's mystical poetry adopts similar ideas on secrecy and their exploration in courtly and Evangelical contexts.

Secrecy and French Humanist Evangelism

Throughout these ancient and medieval sources, secrecy leads to rhetorical explorations intended to describe modes of contemplative questioning on the nature of the divine. Briçonnet draws on these aspects of secrecy to redefine the significance of Christian devotional practices, most notably those relating to mortification, as I discuss below. In his view, human language consists of words referring to empirical objects that are known through sensation and reason, through the body.

56 For a history of occult mentalities from antiquity to modernity, see Carlo Ginzburg, *Myths, Emblems, Clues*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1990).

57 See Guy G. Stroumsa, ed., "From Esotericism to Mysticism in Early Christianity," in *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in The History of Mediterranean And Near Eastern Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 306–7. In an analysis of secrecy in Petrarch's *Secretum*, Carlo Ossola suggests that Petrarch internalizes a model of divine ineffability that first appeared in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, where the theme of Biblical secrecy, as it appears in Isaiah 24:16, becomes associated with ineffability for the first time. Ossola writes that "La Glose ordinaire . . . introduit dans la sémantique du 'secret' biblique une *impossibilitas dicendi* qui ne relève plus d'une interdiction ou d'un *secessus* radical du péché . . . , mais plutôt d'une inadéquation, *inaequabilitas scribendi* qui est assumée par le 'moi.'" Ossola understands this model of ineffability in the gloss on Isaiah (and its mediation through Augustine's ideas about the self's opacity) as the "symbol" for the constitution of the self through writing that, in the author's view, Petrarch adapted in his *Secretum*. As opposed to the prophetic model of secrecy, according to which the prophet "speaks" the Verb but only as a witness to it, Petrarch makes the Ordinary Gloss' radicalization of the Word's alterity a condition of writing about the self. This, for Ossola, represents a capital moment in what he calls the "individualization of discourse." Carlo Ossola, "Verbum et secretum (des Pères de l'Eglise et de Pétrarque)," *Versants* 3 (1982): 28. This issue of *Versants* is devoted to the idea of secrecy.

For pseudo-Dionysius and the Group of Meaux, because God created all beings, the latter retain an element of divine identity. This idea leads Briçonnet to interpret Saint Paul as having perceived the divine truth that is secretly hidden behind the visible image of worldly things and as having thus been able to transfer, through an act of spiritual cognition, their corporeal existence to the spiritual principles that define material existence. He was able to transfer or refer the letter to the spirit. For Briçonnet, Saint Paul's ecstasy allows him to refer material to spiritual reality in a metaphorical process of transfiguration (*translaticius*). Metaphor in this sense—or in Cusa's Latin, *transumptio*—describes a process of spiritual ascent towards mystical knowledge of divine secrets. Briçonnet also draws on metaphors as a means of describing the soul's movement towards unity with the divine. It must do so, he argues, by apprehending the secretly present union between Christ's and man's minds (*mentes*).

These letters show that, to redefine devotional practices and the grounds for discussing them, Christian humanists developed theories of the soul's capacity to know divine secrets. Briçonnet associates human rationality with the animal soul, on the one hand, and the gift of grace or divine secrecy with both faith and intellect, on the other. He writes to Marguerite that man falls into error by falsely believing that his animal or "living soul" (*l'homme animal*) can be justified or made righteous by itself, without the gift of grace:

There are some who lacerate their bodies, working to leave it but only enter it more. They turn like donkeys around the wheel at their pleasure, and yet are prisoners and attached to the wheel while turning it. They vainly believe that, through natural and animal reason, they can penetrate and arrive at the vivifying goal of spiritual life through fasts, prayers, alms and other works, which they falsely believe to be their justification. . . . They do not perceive what God is, though they presume to do so through their living animal soul. Human nature was created in rational living soul and since then was recreated in spirit by Jesus' infinite goodness and gentleness. For this reason Saint Paul says that the first man was created in a living soul and that the second man was created in the vivifying spirit. In bestial animals there is a living soul without reason, which man surpasses in the way that he was created, as it is written in Genesis: 'Inspiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vite et factus est homo in animam viventem.'⁵⁸

58 "Il en est d'autres qui macerent leurs corps, travaillant pour en sortir et plus y entrent: lesquelz comme asnes tournent alentour de la roue à leur plaisir, toutesfois prisonniers et attachés à icelle en la tournant. Ilz cuident par raison naturelle et animale penetrer et pour debvoir parvenir à la fin de la vie spirituelle viviffiante par jeusnes, oraisons, aulmosnes

Brignonnet uses the image of a donkey turning a wheel to evoke his critique of popular devotional penitential practices. While it literally refers to donkeys and farm labor, the image also represents acts of corporeal penitence that, for Brignonnet, typify late medieval popular devotional practices. The image of the donkey and the wheel also became an iconographic commonplace in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: the animal appears sitting upright on the wheel that represents Fortuna, and signifies man's incarceration within the world of contingency and thus human reason's incapacity to see beyond the world of historical flux. Brignonnet here uses the image to critique Church practices; elsewhere, he explains that the image of the donkey illustrates "the corporeal suffering, which is necessary for each person" in what he calls "spiritual exercises" of mortification.⁵⁹ Brignonnet also assimilates the wheel image to the pseudo-Dionysian theory of literary symbols, according to which images can negatively represent that which is "without form": the image of the wheel invoked here also signifies the circular movements of the angels turning around the "divine secrets" of the celestial hierarchy.⁶⁰

Fundamental to Brignonnet's devotion is the idea that mortification should be a symbolic, spiritual act of obedience. It should submit the body, but also all corporeal existence, to the power of divine spirit. Mortification progressively repairs (*répare*) man's disobedience (*l'inobedience de l'imaige*) when practiced each day (*de jour en jour*): "And the life of a Christian is nothing other than to die to the world each day and to live for Jesus Christ."⁶¹ These doctrines would become fundamental to Marguerite's poetry and understanding of death in Evangelical terms.

The Bishop further writes that the old Adam (*viel Adam*) referred to in Scripture, in Genesis 3:17, is a disfigured image (*ymaige deffigurée*) that must be reformed by mortifying the soul's inferior parts and human reason. He develops a doctrine of mortification that includes three levels of spiritual death and

et aultrez ouvres, esquelz cuydent estre et consister leur justification. . . . Lesquelz ne perçoivent, congnoissent et apprehendent ce qui est de Dieu, presumans de soy ce faire, en et par leur ame raisonnable vivante, en laquelle nature humaine a esté crée et depuis par l'infinie bonté et douceur du debonnaire Jesus créé en l'esperit. Pour ceste cause dict Monsieur saint Pol que le premier homme a esté créé en ame vivante et le second en l'esperit viviffiant ('Factus est primus homo in animam viventem, secundus in spiritum vivificantem' [1 Cor. 15:45]). . . ." Brignonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 224 (December, 1522).

59 Ibid., vol. 1, 111 (December 22, 1521).

60 See Brignonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 116–117 and pseudo-Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy* 15, 9, 337C ff., esp. 340 A ff.

61 Brignonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 143 (January 30, 1522).

obedience. He understands mortification in terms of the Pauline anthropology that I discussed above, as the successive deaths of body, soul, and spirit. These deaths all represent one same principle, which Briçonnet illustrates with the metaphor of seeds shedding their shells. He compares spiritual ascent to the way kernels abandon their shells and come to life; the kernel corresponds to the divine mystery that manifests itself in humanity's reformed image. The soul's lower faculties must be mortified, or negated, on the model of Christ's sacrifice so that man's highest spiritual virtues may live. Sensuality dies so that the rational soul lives, which in turn dies so that the faculty of "understanding" may do so.

Briçonnet uses such terms as "reform," "innovate," and "renovate" in keeping with their uses in medieval, patristic reform ideologies as described by Gehart Ladner.⁶² They refer to the idea that man exists in the image and resemblance of Christ but must purify that image through proper devotional acts. He uses metaphors of filiation to show how obedience "inserts" the soul into a universal union with Christ. Obedience produces an illumination of the spirit that reforms (*réforme*) and renovates (*innove*) the image of the "old Adam" (*vieil Adam*). This reformist spiritual doctrine rests on the idea that there is a secret within the human soul that manifests itself as a transcendent and universal truth. Mystical asceticism in this view can be achieved through spiritual acts of mortification, when man demonstrates his will to obey and begins to purify himself from original sin. The soul thereby becomes recreated in the image of the "new, celestial and spiritual" man and in the "plenitude of spirit."⁶³ The

62 Gerhart Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

63 Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 225 (November, 1522). Briçonnet is likely drawing on and developing Lefèvre d'Étaples's commentaries on Col. 2:20–3:11 ("If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations?" *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 337). In a previous letter, he wrote "Miserable are those who value and think that devotional labor and difficulty serve God. They already have their feet in the entry to hell. And to the contrary, to whom God gives his grace (which is present to all who do not create obstacles to it) are already at the doors of paradise. . . . The life of a Christian must not be spent in continual prayer, which is nothing other than an elevation of the spirit. And while saying the Hours and services at Church, or hearing others speak about men, beasts or other creatures, which mention the bodily gifts or virtues that they have, we must throw our soul out of the body and draw ourselves to the spirit or to the spiritual, which is where the truth lies." *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 101 (December 22, 1521). Lefèvre's commentary reads as follows: "What therefore should one mortify? Certainly those things that are

Bishop thus associates the old Adam with the lower parts of the soul, including reason, and attributes the possibility of reform to the potential union of man's spirit with the Holy Spirit.

The Parable of the Sower and *Sermo Humilis*

Briçonnet's uses of secrecy as a principle of transcendence and immanence in the domains of spiritual psychology and rhetoric can be understood as a stylistic use of the low style (*sermo humilis*) such as Eric Auerbach has described it. One of the Bishop's most important literary strategies to illustrate the manner in which the "new man" pierces divine secrets consists of using an agricultural rhetoric that is inspired by the parable of the sower. In this essentially Augustinian rhetorical model, Briçonnet endows his epistolary discourse with Biblical and sacramental virtues. Secrecy allows him to theorize a God that is everywhere accessible for those who are initiated into spiritual truths, and it allows him to use epistolary literature as a vehicle for dispensing the necessary learning that initiation requires.

The agricultural images that Briçonnet weaves into letters by developing the imagery in the sower parable correspond to Augustine's rhetorical and philosophical practices. The low rhetorical style is, in the Augustinian tradition of the *sermo humilis*, best suited for communicating divine secrets to the community of the faithful. We can recall the passage from Augustine that Auerbach cites in his study on *sermo humilis*:

Having already heard many parts of the sacred books explained in a reasonable and acceptable way, I came to regard those passages which had previously struck me as absurd, and therefore repelled me, as holy and profound mysteries. The authority of the sacred writings seemed to me all the more deserving of reverence and divine faith in that scripture was easily accessible to every reader, while yet guarding a mysterious dignity in its deeper sense. In plain words and very humble modes of speech it offered itself to everyone, yet stretched the understanding of those who were not shallow-minded. It welcomed all comers to its hospitable

of the spirit . . . not those things that are externals. . . . The former are spiritual things: those things in which we combat the members of the flesh; that is carnal passions. . . . But you ask restlessly whether lacerations of the body, vigils, poverty, hardships, do nothing at all? By no means do I say that, but only when it is fitting, and they ought to be turned to the flesh in diverse ways." Lefevre d'Etaples, *S. Pauli Epistolae*, folio 186v [translation mine].

embrace, yet through narrow openings attracted a few to you—a few, perhaps, but far more than it would have done had it not spoken with such noble authority and drawn the crowds to its embrace by its holy humility.⁶⁴

Eric Auerbach shows how the low rhetorical style (*sermo humilis*) is, for early Christian authors, associated with the term *humus*, with the earth, and by extension, with that which is low, small, and without value. It thus represents Christ's humility in His acts of incarnation and suffering on the cross. Auerbach also shows how, for early Christian authors, the incarnation was itself a *humilitas* narrated in a low style.

Inspired by the parable of the sower, the Bishop compares God to a laborer who sows the earth, hiding his seeds in the earth like treasures. Just as the seed must die to make the plant live, the rational soul must be mortified to make the spirit live. Briçonnet elaborates that

... the rational soul living by reason ... must also die, like sensuality, because the divine seed of filiation has come from beyond reason and transcends it, and turns all fruit to good profit by transcending and absorbing all reason. Reason must be mortified so that the seed can be turned to good account. For, as Saint Paul says, 'The second Adam was made in vivifying spirit.' The seed of the supercelestial Word, which turns the filiation to good account, can only be received in the understanding, which lives in and through the vivifying spirit ... and Christians must not live except in spiritual life, which does not know reason, because it is contrary to that life.⁶⁵

The divine Word is, according to Briçonnet's mystical theology, present in the world for all those who, through the exercise of free will, dispose themselves to

64 Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, 142 (6.8.1–23). Cited in Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 48–49.

65 "[l'] ame raisonnable vivant par raison ... doit aussy mourir, comme la sensualité, car comme la semence divine de filiation est venue oultre et surmontant toute raison, aussy fructifie fruit qui transcende et absorbe toute raison. Laquelle doit estre mortifiée avant que la semence puisse fructifier. Car, comme dict saint Pol: 'Secundus Adam factus est in spiritum vivificantem.' La semence du Verbe superceleste, qui fructifie la filiation n'est recevable qu'en l'entendement ... et ne doit le chrestien plus vivre que vie spirituelle, laquelle ne congnoisse raison, par ce qu'elle luy est contraire." Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 172 (February 26, 1522).

receive it by “humility of faith and humble faithfulness.” Through its first creation, the soul remains “capable and susceptible” of receiving the “divine seed,” but it becomes good earth (*bonne terre*) that is “fertile” and capable of receiving the Word only by lowering itself in humility on the example of Christ. To render itself capable of receiving the divine Spirit, the soul must die so that the divine light can “open” the secret kernel—the seed that is “surrounded by its cover and hidden like a treasure in a chest”⁶⁶—which represents the hidden union of Christ with the soul.

This agricultural imagery befits the themes of humility and mortification of spirit. For the Bishop it is necessary, as Saint Paul admonishes, not to attribute the power of vivification to ourselves but, as he writes, to “hide through humility in the earth, through consideration of our vileness and nothingness to obtain mortification,” and by “humble prayer to attain to wait for convenient grace, moistening our humiliation and self-annihilation, so that our sensuality can die, which is our shell and hardness resisting the movement of spirit, which desires to be turned to good yield.”⁶⁷ His agricultural metaphors stylistically reflect his doctrine of humility and of Pauline grace by playing on the associations among low rhetorical style (*humilis*), images of the earth (*humus*), and spiritual humility.

In sum, Brignonnet’s doctrine and rhetoric of mortification derive from Saint Paul and Augustine, but he emphasizes the pseudo-Dionysian concept of union as well. For pseudo-Dionysius, God is all things because He causes them, and He is none of those things because He transcends them as their cause. Any uses of human language to praise God thus diminish His totality because human discourse refers only to created beings, in his view. The Bishop writes that

... all words belong to the divine All-Word and only Word, from which they proceed and are derived. The divine Word is All words, and no particular word is identical to him. The divine All-Word can be named by all and by no human words, because there is no name that is properly His, and because there is no reason why he would be named by one word more than another. There is no name that can name Him, because each name is particular and proper to each creature, and He has all names, as the creator of all creatures who are finite, and the infinite cannot be named.⁶⁸

66 Ibid., vol. 1, 171 (February 26, 1522).

67 Ibid., vol. 1, 172 (February 26, 1522).

68 “... tous verbes et parolles sont au Tout-Verbe et seul Verbe, duquel ilz sont procedéz et derivéz. Lequel est Tout-Verbe et nul particulier est luy. Lequel est de tous verbes et parolles nominable et de nul; car il n'est nom qui soit le sien et n'y a point de raison qu'il

When transposed into the domain of spiritual psychology, this idea implies that the soul must be emptied of all its particularities to conform itself to the divine totality. In Briçonnet's terms, the soul must become sterile, infertile, and annihilated before it can become renewed by the Holy Spirit.

This negative theological method represents the only pathway, for Briçonnet, towards a reciprocal relationship with God, or what he calls a reciprocal love (*amour reciproque*).⁶⁹ Through mortification, the soul offers itself in a sacrificial praise that paradoxically diminishes its dignity but thereby augments (*faict croistre*) its receptivity to the salutary "water" of the Gospel. Through self-annihilation, the soul becomes an abyss (*abisme*) that is a living confession of its own sin. In so doing, the soul calls for a reciprocal gift of grace that emanates from what Briçonnet names, correspondingly, the divine abyss:

The All-Powerful and great treasurer of grace, in who all the treasures of science and wisdom are hidden in abyssal plenitude (which alone is unfathomable grace and treasure), seeing human nature in an abyss of corruption on account of Adam's sin of presumption . . . sent . . . the gentle lamb, Lord of the sky and the earth, to rescue the abyss of sin, asking for the help of the abyss of grace ('Abissus abissum invocat'), which is true wisdom, so as to open the infinite abyss of mercy. . . .⁷⁰

Christ brings an abyss that Briçonnet identifies with the Gospel. Briçonnet uses the word abyss, or "abisme," to represent the idea of the source, that is, of the Evangelical "water" that nourishes spiritual indigence. By contrast, the attempt to augment one's honor, profit, or pleasure through human reason only diminishes the soul's dignity from the point of view of transcendence:

. . . the eternal Word, Son of God, has sewed himself as a seed in human nature, by making himself a true man. He has yielded children of God.

soit plus nommé d'un nom que d'autre et n'est nom qui le puisse nommer, car chacun nom est particulier et propre à chacune creature et il (a) tout nom, comme createur de toutes creatures qui sont finies, et infinitude ne se peult nommer." Ibid., vol. 1, 148 (February 15, 1522).

69 Cf. Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 108 (December 22, 1521).

70 "Le tout-puissant et grant tresorier de grace, auquel sont tous les tresors de science et sapience en abissalle plenitude cachéz (qui seul est grace et tresor impuisible), voiant nature humaine abismée par Adam en peché contracté par presumption . . . a envoié . . . le doux aingneau, dominateur du ciel et de la terre, au secours de l'abisme de peché, reclamant en son ayde l'abisme de grace: ('Abissus abissum invocat') qui est la vraye sapience, pour ouvrir les abisme infinies de misericorde. . . ." Ibid.

And if he does not turn all souls to good yield, it is the fault of the earth, which renders itself incapable and unworthy of such an excellent seed, as the Gospel amply expresses and declares about the three types of earth where the seed has no profit: pride, avarice and luxury, about which Saint John speaks. . . .⁷¹

Brignonnet's mystical doctrines of grace and self-annihilation have a long history in medieval and speculative mystical theology, and this critique of worldly temptations becomes the central feature in his call for Church reform. Here, Brignonnet makes what is perhaps his most powerful critique of the worldly Church:

The water that issues from the abyss of wisdom and Evangelical doctrine is not being distributed by those who are in charge of it, from which results the sterility and drought of souls, and not for lack of water. . . . The Church is at present arid and dry like the river in southern heat. . . . Each person seeks his profit or honor. They no longer think of God's honor. We are entirely terrestrial, we who ought to be entirely spiritual. And that comes from the lack of the water of wisdom and of Evangelical doctrine, which does not flow, and is not distributed, as it should be.⁷²

Auerbach's ideas on the devotional values of different rhetorical styles and their publics helps us understand how humanist Evangelical thinkers used vernacular literary resources to disseminate Scripture. Brignonnet declares the need for reform on the basis of Evangelical principles and the need to teach Scripture directly to the faithful, and this was the first critique of its kind in France. Like Erasmus, Brignonnet develops an allegory of spiritual corruption

71 " . . . le Verbe eternel, Filz de Dieu, s'est semé, semence en nature humaine, en se faisant vray homme et en soy (qui estoit la terre bonne) a fructifié des enfans de Dieu. Et sy en tous ne fructifie, c'est la faulte de la terre, qui se rend incapable et indigne de sy excellente semence, comme il exprime et declare amplement en l'Evangille des trois especes de terre où la semence n'a prouffict, qui est orgueoul, avarice et luxure, et dont parle Monsieur saint Jehan. . . ." Ibid., vol. 1, 167 (February 26, 1522).

72 "L'eau qui est issue de l'abîme de sapience et doctrine évangélique n'est distribuée par ceux qui en ont la charge, dont procède la stérilité et sécheresse des âmes, et non par faute d'eau. . . . L'église est de présent aride et sèche comme le torrent en la grande chaleur australe. . . . Un chacun cherche son profit et honneur. Il n'est plus question de celui de Dieu. Nous sommes tout terrestres, qui devrions être tout esprit. Et cela procède par faute d'eau de sapience et de doctrine évangélique qui ne court et n'est distribuée comme elle devrait." Ibid., vol. 1, 84 (December 22, 1521).

through the image of wellsprings, which are the Word of the Gospel itself, that have been prevented from flowing forth to the public, and he combines this Evangelical cause with a tradition of medieval mystical spirituality that emphasizes the direct, living relation between the sacred and the profane within the soul of each individual. In this way, he circumvents the need for the institutionally governed mediation and control of sacred texts.⁷³

In a different context, Erasmus had developed the same images six years earlier for similar reasons, but with a set of different rhetorical and mystical presuppositions. This use of water imagery to represent the accessibility of the Gospel was of central importance to Marguerite de Navarre. The particular shape that Briçonnet gives to this call for reform, however, lies in his association of water imagery with the mystical doctrine of mortification and self-annihilation. Briçonnet's mystical interpretations of Scripture show a level of complexity and richness made possible by the humanist Evangelical thinkers who had begun articulating these doctrines in France beginning in 1490. The Bishop brings together a complex fusion of humanist, Evangelical, and mystical theologies relating to the idea of secrecy that lie at the core of his reform ideology.

Several issues define the question of secrecy in Briçonnet and Marguerite's correspondence: justification by faith alone, the value of works, the status of devotional practices, the function of aesthetics in spirituality, and the relation of the soul to grace. Briçonnet's thought shows that secrecy was an intellectually and historically precise problem that preoccupied French humanist reformers early in the first half of the sixteenth century. Examining these issues from the point of view of secrecy makes it possible to further define the French reform movement's specificities with respect both to other medieval and to early modern philosophical and theological traditions.

73 Cf. Briçonnet and Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 185 (March 6, 1522), where the Bishop writes "Alas, Madam! There are many who have left the fountain and the vein of living water and who through contempt have made cisterns that cannot retain the waters. They believe themselves to be satisfied and when they come to the point of death, to cross the great threshold, trip and find themselves drowning in the vehement and sulphuric waters. The others, through malice, however much they have the true fountain in their possession, know that their neighbors need and seek it, and disturb its waters with their feet, which are the sinister passions and corrupt lives that prevent us from drinking it. Yet others hold the keys to the unfathomable source of the fountain of life; through blindness and ignorance they cannot or do not want to permit others to enter, which causes drought for the poor lambs who ask for the water and pasture of spiritual doctrine. Their tongues are dry from ardent desire, and there are no shepherds who communicate it to them or open the door for them to drink any..."

Through his mystical interpretation of such Biblical texts as the parable of the sower, Briçonnet reunites fundamental elements both of the humanist Renaissance and the early French reform movements. Agricultural rhetoric has, in his letters, a cosmological dimension and belongs to the kinds of symbolism used by sixteenth-century humanists to represent the theme of renewal. But this rhetoric also communicates a consciousness on the Bishop's part of the novelty of his reform project and discourse.⁷⁴ For him, secrecy relates to questions of spiritual change, and the idiosyncrasies in his style serve to define a new relation to the idea of divine secrecy that the Bishop uses to rally Marguerite and the French royal court in denouncing the spiritual aridity of the French ecclesiastical institution.

In many respects, Briçonnet's doctrines stand closer to Erasmus's spirituality than to those of either Luther or Calvin, who adopted dualist views on the structure of the human persona.⁷⁵ Both Briçonnet and Erasmus adopt this Pauline anthropology, which enables them to maintain the view that the intermediary function of the soul is fallen but latently embodies a hidden, divine spark that can be reignited through the mystical union of human and divine spirits. Both Briçonnet and Erasmus use these three Pauline categories to reformulate ancient and medieval mystical doctrines on the soul's divine spark (called *synderesis*, or *scintilla animae*) into early modern devotional models that serve to challenge Roman orthodoxy.⁷⁶ Theorizing the soul as containing an element of the divine principle allows them to establish a direct relation between believers and the divine, without necessarily needing the institutionalized Church to mediate.

74 On vegetation as a sign of humanist self-awareness, see Gerhart Ladner, "Vegetation Symbolism and the Concept of Renaissance," in *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 302–03.

75 On Erasmus's use of this tripartite division and the idea of *synderesis*, see Chapter 1. On Marguerite de Navarre's use of the idea in her devotional poetry, see Chapter 3.

76 On the history of the metaphor of the spark of the soul, see Michel Tardieu, "Ψυχῆς σπινθήρ". Histoire d'une métaphore dans la tradition platonicienne jusqu'à Eckhart," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 21:3–4 (1975): 224–55.

Mystical and Courtly Secrets: Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549)

General Introduction

Marguerite de Navarre's literary works reflect in depth on the nature of mystical experience, and they have continued to raise questions about the orthodoxy and heterodoxy of her works. Throughout her life, she maintained close ties to the humanist and Evangelical reform movements. She established and sustained close contact with Lefèvre and Briçonnet between 1521 and 1536, and she was directly involved in their reform initiatives, both in her capacities as a political figure and as a literary author.¹ In the last years of her life, as she wrote *The Prisons* (1547), she continued to write prose and poetry that drew inspiration from the mystical and Evangelical views that she learned from Briçonnet in her youth.

Marguerite's literary works engage readers in a wide array of matters relating to mystical philosophy, Evangelical spirituality, Church and state authority, and courtly culture. Studying secrecy across a selection of her poetic and prose works helps to develop perspective into Marguerite's views on secrecy in spiritual anthropology and courtly life and how she combines these elements from earlier humanist Evangelical perspectives. This chapter focuses on the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* (*Miroir de l'ame pecheresse*, 1531) and *The Prisons* (*Les Prisons*, 1547) by tracing Augustinian and medieval mystical questions of secrecy through these devotional works.²

1 On Marguerite and the reform movement, see Henry Heller's "Marguerite de Navarre and the Reformers of Meaux," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 33 (1971): 271–310 and especially Jonathan Reid, *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009) and "Marguerite de Navarre and Evangelical Reform," in Ferguson and McKinley, *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 29–58.

2 For a brief overview of Marguerite's life and importance as an author and person, see Rouben Cholakian, "Volume Editor's Introduction," in *Marguerite de Navarre: Selected Writings, a Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. Rouben Cholakian and Mary Skemp (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1–39 and the "Volume Editor's Bibliography," 39–42. See also Gary Ferguson and Mary McKinley, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 1–29 and bibliography.

Secrecy in Devotional Poetics

Marguerite's early and late works rearticulate the Augustinian opposition between sacred and profane pleasures (honors, profits, and pleasures), making it a vital feature in both her poetic and prose thought.³ This opposition, moreover, situates her writing in the discursive domain of humanist Evangelical critique. How does Marguerite understand the spiritual turn inwards towards the soul's arcane dignity? In Chapters 1 and 2, I discussed how humanist Evangelicals used secrecy to critique social, political, and religious values and practices for having gone astray. Marguerite draws on the Augustinian opposition between secrecy and worldliness—which was also mediated to her through Petrarch's works—as a form of internal, spiritual combat between sacred and profane values.⁴ In her most important devotional poems, titled *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* and *The Prisons*, secrecy has both mystical and Evangelical significance, and the aesthetics of secrecy that she develops shares common elements with early humanist thought.

Marguerite relates secrecy not only to deception but also to self-deceptively disguised motives. Her poems depict worldly lusts as blinding: they blind the self to its own spiritual resources, which lie beneath the moral tarnish caused by pride. Self-love prevents God from seeing Himself reflected in man's image. Because man's corrupt will has rendered his image of the divine opaque, he can no longer perfectly reflect God's love back to Him in the manner of a polished mirror.⁵ The mirror metaphor is essentially a Christocentric one

3 For a partial list of passages where this theme appears in Marguerite's works, see Simone Glasson, "Introduction," in *Les Prisons*, ed. Simone Glasson (Geneva: Droz, 1978), 26, n. 45.

4 On Augustinian and Petrarchan problems of free will in Marguerite de Navarre's first mystical poem, the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* (1527), see Reinier Leushuis, "Dialogue, Self, and Free Will: Marguerite de Navarre's *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, and Petrarch's *Secretum*," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 66, no. 1 (2004): 69–89. On Augustine and Petrarch's *Secretum*, see Francesco Petrarca, *Secretum. Il mio segreto*, ed. Enrico Fenzi (Milan: Mursia, 1992), 291, n. 28. Fenzi notes that "... il titolo [*Secretum*...] definisce il carattere intimo del dialogo-confessione, e comporta pure un'accezione spaziale che questo proemio più volte sottolinea ('mee solitudinis abdita'; 'in secretiorem loci parem'; 'in abdito'), modellandosi soprattutto sul racconto della propria e che s. Agostino fa nel 1. VIII delle *Confessioni*, in cui è necessariamente 'segreto' l'intimo del proprio cuore (VIII 8, 19: 'Tum in illa grandi rixa interioris domus meae, quam fortiter excitaveram cum anima mea in cubiculo nostro, corde meo...'), e infine il luogo fisico entro cui si compie l'ultima discesa del protagonista sino al 'fondo arcano' della sua anima (ibid., 12, 28...)."

5 For Augustine, the Pauline image of the mirror refers to man's fallenness and lack of spiritual vision. He describes this fallenness as a pilgrimage away from the divine, during which he is more present to himself than to God. But for Augustine this presence to self represents a

for Christian humanists; in the Evangelical point of view that Marguerite espouses, only Christ can serve as a mirror and intermediary between man and God. Christ reflects both man's creation and man's corruption simultaneously. Furthermore, in Marguerite's poetics, man can attempt to hide his corruption either from himself or from God, but only in vain. To attempt to conceal oneself from God's omniscient vision involves deceiving oneself about the nature of divine omniscience. Both divine justice and man's conscience, which bears witness to that justice, inevitably overrule this self-deception.

Secrecy acquires different and tensely opposed meanings for Marguerite. It refers to hiding one's motives and actions from oneself in self-deception. It can signify the human soul's fall away from God on account of sinful desires. Or, in a different sense, it can also signify God's separation from the profane world. Yet, as I discuss further below, these oppositions between different types of secrecy revolve around a common principle in Marguerite's works, namely, that God is infinite and separate from but also immanent in the world. This secret presence of the divine in the world can, in this perspective, only be known through an act of spirit.

For Marguerite, how does creation, which has no being outside God's power, renew and reform itself in God's image?⁶ Marguerite's response to this question

form of ignorance, which he opposes to the clarity and brightness of divine knowledge and vision. Cf. Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, 241 (10.5.7): "For it is you, Lord, who judge me. No one knows what he himself is made of, except his own spirit within him, yet there is still some part of him which remains hidden even from his own spirit; but you, Lord, know everything about a human being because you have made him. And though in your sight I may despise myself and reckon myself dust and ashes I know something about you which I do not know about myself. It is true that we now see only a tantalizing reflection in a mirror, and so it is that while I am on pilgrimage far from you I am more present to myself than to you; yet I do know that you cannot be defiled in any way whatever, whereas I do not know which temptations I may have the strength to resist, and to which ones I shall succumb. Our hope is that, because you are trustworthy, you do not allow us to be tempted more fiercely than we can bear, but along with the temptation you ordain the outcome of it, so that we can endure. Let me, then, confess what I know about myself, and confess too what I do not know, because what I know of myself I know only because you shed light on me, and what I do not know I shall remain ignorant about until my darkness becomes like bright noon before your face."

- 6 Christian humanist responses to the problem of how we accede to divine secrets can be considered in light of the following passage by Augustine in *The Confessions*, 375–76 (13.36.41): "It is different for people who see creation through your Spirit, for you are seeing it through their eyes. Thus when such people see that these things are good, you are seeing that they are good; whatever created things please them for your sake, it is you who are arousing their delight in these things; and anything that gives us joy through your Spirit gives you joy in us. . . . Plainly I am bound to say that no one knows the reality of God except the Spirit of God."

lies partly in her interpretation of Psalm 32's significance.⁷ Psalm 32, like Psalm 51, has always occupied a central place in the poetry of devotional praise. It is a penitential Psalm that describes how the avowal and recognition of human suffering has a transformative power on the soul. The Psalm's speaker pleads for divine forgiveness and describes God's act of forgiveness as a form of divine secrecy in the sense that His forgiveness hides or "covers" the soul's sins from view. The Psalmist writes,

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. . . . Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.⁸

Early modern religious poetry that is inspired by Psalmic penitential poetry often draws on Psalm 51's opposition between secrecy and openness, imitating the Psalm's cover metaphor to describe divine pardon. In this view, God's act of covering human sin represents the only legitimate form of secrecy, because any attempts to hide sin from view inevitably fail due to His omniscience and infinite justice.

How, then, can we too know the gifts that God has given us? This is the answer that comes to me: if we know something through his Spirit, it is still true to say that *no one knows* it except *God's own Spirit*; for just as it could rightly be said to people who spoke in the Spirit of God, *It is not you who are speaking*, so too is it rightly said to those who know anything in the Spirit of God, 'It is not you who are knowing this.' With equal justice could it be said to people who contemplate creation in the Spirit of God, 'It is not you who are seeing this.' . . . Through him we see that everything is good which in any degree has being, because it derives from him who has being in no degree at all, but is simply *He Is* [Exodus 3:14]." On Exodus 3:14 and its importance for humanist Evangelical spiritual psychology, see below.

7 On Clément Marot's (1496–1544) translation of the Psalms (1531), see Clément Marot, *Oeuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Gérard Defaux, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Paris: Bordas, 1990), 557–682 and notes, 1201–1208; for bibliography on Marot and the Psalms, see 1209–1213.

8 Psalm 32:1–5. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 801.

Marguerite's devotional poems draw on Psalm 51 to suggest that the only legitimate way to seek divine contrition is to avow one's sinfulness.⁹ The soul must, through the medium of poetry, performatively unveil its complete incapacity to act in ways worthy of God's sight. At the opening of Marguerite's *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, we see how this gesture of humility imitates Christ's act of humility; it is a form of *imitatio christi*. Marguerite addresses Christ when she writes,

Since you humble yourself
to join your heart to mine
by becoming an ordinary mortal,
I humble myself to give you thanks.
But since to thank you properly is not in my power,
take my heart and pardon my inadequacies.¹⁰

Because God grants this pardon only as a free and unmerited gift, the speaker must supplicate for that pardon in utter humility. The confession of sins that were previously held secret thus represents an act of pleading to God that he disclose the secrets of Scripture, so that man can attain a mystical union in which he comes to see God clearly in the light of divine felicity. Poetic prayer has a privileged relation to this form of sacrifice through supplication, because it not only confesses the soul's ontological indigence, but it also uses conventions of humility to suggest that human language has a limited capacity to describe sacred truth. From the point of view of human finitude, divine secrecy can only be described from the darkness and opacity of discursive language, that is, in the figurative obscurity of human poetic speech. For humanist Evangelical thinkers, however, this mode of poetic supplication has greater spiritual value than the logical, rational, professionalized academic discourses of institutionalized theology.

9 On Psalm 51's importance for Marguerite's poem, see its mention in Isabelle Garnier with Isabelle Pantin, "Opening and Closing Reflections: The *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* and the *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*," in Ferguson and McKinley, *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 125, where the authors also note Cottrell's view that Marguerite, in using this Psalm, inspires herself from the *Miserere* (a prayer of repentance).

10 "Puis qu'il vous plaist tant vous humilier/Que vostre cuer avec le myen lyer,/En vous faisant homme neïvement,/Je vous en randz graces très humblement./Comme je doib n'est pas en ma puissance;/Prenez mon cuer, excusez l'ignorance." Marguerite de Navarre, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, in *Selected Writings: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. Rouben Cholakian and Skemp, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 105, ll. 569–574.

Mirrors of Christian Self-Knowledge

The *Mirror of the Sinful Soul's* poetic speaker represents the human soul's condition both before and after its "justification" by God's free act of grace. The mirror metaphor alludes in part to the poem's attempt to depict both the soul's depravity and its potential dignity, so that the mirror represents the soul's status as nothing before becoming transformed and its deification in God's image through the action of divine grace. The mirror metaphor points to the speaker's wish "that each might see,/What the Gift of GOD the Creator does,/When it pleases him to justify a heart. . . ."¹¹ The Prologue describes justification as a three-stage descent and reascent: first, the soul lives blinded by its state of sin; second, as it becomes illuminated by divine grace, it regains spiritual vision; lastly, it becomes justified and made righteous, which restores its original dignity as it is absorbed into the divine totality.¹² Grace brings the gift of faith that justifies the heart, and brings with it a knowledge of transcendental goodness, wisdom, and power (*Bonté, Sapience, & Puissance*). This knowledge of God's transcendental identity remains secret to profane eyes but opens itself to accession through an infusion of love and charity, bringing with it an

11 Translations of the Prologue are mine (no published translations of the Prologue are available to my knowledge), which I cite from Marguerite de Navarre, *Le MIROIR/De Treschrestienne/Princesse Marguerite/de France, Royne de Navarre,/Duchesse d'Alençon & de Berry, auquel elle voit/&son neant, & son/tout* (Paris: A. Augereau, 1533), which includes no line numbers. Marguerite's *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* was published in 1531, republished twice in 1533, then again in 1538 and 1539. Cf. On its history and the Sorbonne's condemnation of the work as being heterodox, see Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): étude biographique et littéraire*. 2 vols., vol. 1 (Geneva: Slatkine, 1978), p. 167 ff. and especially Isabelle Garnier and Isabelle Pantin's "Opening and Closing Reflections," 109–160 and bibliography. Garnier and Pantin discuss the mirror metaphor's history and its spiritual importance for Marguerite and her period. On patristic uses of mirror imagery, see Gerhart Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*, 2 ed. (Cambridge Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 1959; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

12 On themes of Neoplatonic ascent in Marguerite's poetic works see Philip Ford's recent essay titled "Neo-Platonic Themes of Ascent in Marguerite de Navarre," in Ferguson and McKinley, *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 89–108. On problems of narrative and mystical ascent, see Paula Sommers, *Celestial Ladders: Readings in Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry of Spiritual Ascent* (Geneva: Droz, 1989) and Gary Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief: Marguerite de Navarre's Devotional Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).

alacritous sense of purpose and unwavering hope (*espoir ferme*) that dissipates all vain fear (*vaine crainte*).¹³

Although this accession to secrecy initially occurs in an immediate way, the Holy Spirit continues to secretly operate within the soul (it “has no rest”) until it has “. . . deified/The one, who has by Faith in God devoted himself” (*deifié/Celluy, qui s’est par Foy en DIEU fié*). Grace acts secretly in the initial instant of change to the extent that it surges forth from the soul’s inmost interior spaces, but it also continues to transform the soul by converting it from the blindness of sin—and from the “nothingness” of its ontological indigence when separated from God—towards the illuminative and deifying vision given by faith.

Temporally, the shift from secrecy to openness brings about an instantaneous qualitative change, which then unfolds through time in a progressive manner.¹⁴ The Prologue announces a profoundly mystical form of Evangelical poetic reflection on the human soul, showing how the gift of faith leads it through stages of spiritual ascent in the experience of utter humility—of nothingness in fullness and fullness in nothingness—and how the soul comes to participate in God’s own being (“O happy gift, that makes man become God:/ And to possess his all desirable being”), which previously had the status of an absolutely transcendent secret to profane eyes.¹⁵

The *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* depicts human nature as blind and incapable of attaining the root of its sufferings. Sin remains temporarily secret until it cedes to the eternal transparency of theoretical vision. Sin metaphorically “covers” spiritual vision, rendering moral illness a latent yet determining factor in worldly experience. In the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, the speaker attributes this blindness to human nature alone, yet the natural world conspires with human fallenness in veiling sinfulness. The poem’s first line cites Psalm 51, as

13 The Prologue bases itself in part on the notion of illuminative grace described in the Gospel according to John. In the experience of illumination—through the infusion of divine love (John 1–9) and through the revelation that “God is love” (1 John 4)—all fear becomes dissipated. On Briçonnet’s use of Saint John, see Michel Veissière, “Guillaume Briçonnet et l’Évangile selon Saint Jean,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 79 (1995): 431–438. For later humanist Evangelical uses of John, see Jean-Claude Margolin, “Bovelles et son commentaire de l’Évangile johannique,” in *Philosophies de la Renaissance* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1998), 89–115.

14 In Chapter 4 I discuss how secrecy functions in the *Heptameron* in narrative temporality.

15 “O l’heureux don, qui faict l’homme Dieu estre:/Et posseder son tout desyrable estre.” Marguerite, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul, Au Lecteur*. On the status of the poetic speaker, see Gary Ferguson, “Now in a Glass Darkly: The Textual Status of the *Je Parlant* in the *Miroir* of Marguerite de Navarre,” *Renaissance Studies: Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 5, 4 (1991): 398–411.

the speaker utters a supplicative wish that the soul might become like a mirror to God. The poet writes,

*A clean heart create for me, God.
Where is that hell fraught with misery,
Suffering, pain, and torment?
Where the pit of maledictions
Out of which emerges endless despair?
Is there an abyss torturous and clear enough
To punish one tenth of my sins?
So great in number are they
That the vastness blurs my vision
So that I cannot see well enough to count them.
I am overwhelmed.
Worse still, I am too incompetent
To deal with the least of them.
I sense they are deeply rooted in my being,
And all around me I see no effect, no sign
Which is not a branch, a flower,
A leaf or a fruit generated by them.¹⁶*

From this poetic and humanist Evangelical perspective, lyrical subjectivity and nature combine to forge a poetics of blindness—of illusion causing suffering and suffering causing further illusion—in the tradition of what Étienne Gilson once termed Socratic Christianity, which considers self-knowledge Christianity's highest spiritual ideal.¹⁷ The speaker's poetic posture is a moral

16 "Seigneur Dieu cree en moy cueur net. Où est l'enfer remply entierement/De tout malheur, travail, peine, et tourment? Où est le puitz de malediction,/Dont sans fin sort desesperation?/Est il de mal nul si profond abisme/Qui suffisant fust pour punir disme/De mes pechez? qui sont en si grand nombre,/Qu'infinitude rend si obscure l'ombre,/Que les compter ne bien veoir je ne puis:/Car trop avant avecques eulx je suis./Et qui pis est, je n'ay pas la puissance/D'avoir d'ung seul, au vray, la congnoissance./Bien sens en moy que j'en ay la racine,/Et au dehors ne voy effect ne signe,/Qui ne soit tout branche, fleur, fueille, et fruit,/Que tout au tour de moy elle produict." Marguerite de Navarre, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, 77, ll. 1–15.

17 On Christian philosophy and self-knowledge from Late Antiquity through Montaigne and Pascal, see Étienne Gilson, "La connaissance de soi-même et le socratisme chrétien," in *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1989), 214–233 and, by the same author, *La théologie mystique de Saint Bernard* (Paris: Vrin, 1986), 90–94, 220–223. Cf. Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Le socratisme chrétien," in *L'éveil de la conscience dans la civilisation*

one, exhorting readers to develop awareness of the soul's indigence and of the blinding impulses to seek the honors, profits, and pleasures to which it is pushed.

The idea of the self's opacity here occupies a central place in the Augustinian and humanist-Evangelical understanding of man. In this model for the self's obscurity, grace at first works instantaneously, and it is from the retrospective distance of autobiographically structured narrative that the poet recognizes its initial effects. Grace surges forth from a place of radical Augustinian immanence and subsequently extends itself through time, working to convert the soul through a progressive process. It is through the three-stage process of conversion that secrecy defines spiritual change: first, grace acts in an instantaneous manner; second, it works its effects slowly, concealed beneath the surface of customary experiences and shedding new light upon them; third, it liberates the soul from those customary experiences and attachments through a full illumination that discloses the meaning of the divine Word, returning the soul to its divine similitude.

The tripartite structure set forth in the Prologue serves as the discursive framework for the soul's movement between nothingness and divine being.¹⁸ The framework posits an initial moment of illumination in which God's immanence in the world acts covertly to operate change and eventually absorbs that world into spiritual transcendence. Grace becomes initiated secretly, which allows it to remain separate from worldly corruption. But this secrecy also enables Marguerite's poetic narrative to describe a delay between God's initial gifts of grace, on the one hand, and the moment when the soul becomes capable of mirroring that grace back to God, on the other. Secrecy in this way belongs to a dialectical process of concealing and revealing, leading to conformity of human and divine wills. The poetic narrative emphasizes the significance of spiritual conversion by introducing a delay between the initial moment of illumination and the full disclosure of divine essence. If God's gift of grace did not act secretly at first, and if the poet's transformation did not

médiévale, Conférence Albert-le-Grand 1968 (Montreal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1968), 41–46. On medieval theology and spiritual psychology, see Robert Javelet's foundational study on Western mystical thought, *Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967).

18 For a recent, general discussion of Marguerite and patterns of ascent, see Philip Ford's essay "Neo-Platonic Themes of Ascent in Marguerite de Navarre," in Ferguson and McKinley, *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 89–107. Ford also discusses the dialectic of All and Nothing, which I mention here and discuss further below. On conversion in Marguerite's *Les Prisons*, see Cynthia Skenazi, "Les Prisons' Poetics of Conversion," also in *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 211–235.

unfold slowly through time, the conversion would lose its significance. The narrative gives meaning to the conversion by depicting the delay between the first and last moments of illumination. If there were no such delay, the conversion could simply appear unearned. In the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, secrecy obeys both a momentary temporal pattern—in which transformation occurs in a single, qualitatively unique moment—but also determines the course of extended chronological time during which spiritual combat takes place as the soul attempts to reform itself.¹⁹

In the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, human poetic language fails to represent divine secrecy. The speaker interlaces marginal Biblical verses and human poetic language to subordinate human language to the divine Word and poetic authority to Scriptural wisdom.²⁰ In its subordination to Biblical verse, poetic expression becomes associated with the soul's corrupt and secret desires, as the poem's speaker describes when saying,

The moment I think I see better,
a branch comes and covers my eyes.
And when I try to speak, a fruit
too bitter to swallow fills my mouth.
If I am prone to listen,
countless leaves block my ears.
My nose is obstructed by flowers.
And so it is that in pain, shrieking, and weeping,
my unfortunate soul inhabits this world
of darkness and obscurity, a slave and a prisoner.²¹

19 For a reading of Marguerite's works from the point of view of Meister Eckhart's notion of the "now moment," see Robert D. Cottrell, *The Grammar of Silence*, 74 ff. Under the influence of structuralist discourse, these two narrative axes have, in Cottrell's work for instance, been described as being paradigmatic (or vertical), on the one hand, and syntagmatic (or horizontal), on the other. I am suggesting that secrecy functions in part through the dynamic tension between these two axes.

20 For a discussion of the marginal Biblical verses in the poem, see Cynthia Skenazi, "Les annotations en marge du *Miroir de l'ame pecheresse*," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 55, 2 (1993): 255–270 and Isabelle Garnier with Isabelle Pantin, "Opening and Closing Reflections," 123–124.

21 "Si je cuide regarder pour le mieulx,/Une branche me vient fermer les yeux; et ma bouche tombe, quant veuil parler;/Le fruit par trop amer à avaller./Si pour ouyr, mon esperit se reveille;/Force fueilles entrent en mon aurette;/Aussi mon naiz est tout bousché de fleurs. Voilà comment en peine, criz, et pleurs/En terre gist sans clarté ni lumiere/Ma paovre

Nature prevents the speaker from perceiving and expressing spiritual truths. Nature relates to the senses, to corporeality, and thus to sin. The speaker is aware that she cannot attain her inner nothingness:

I feel within me sinful inclinations,
not the least of which is my tendency to deceive.
The more I conceal and hide,
the more my sins gather and grow in my heart. . . ."²²

Worldly attachments in Marguerite's religious poetry are, as I discuss further below, prisons or bondages from which the poem's speaker cannot escape alone. The path towards liberty in the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* lies in the confession of the soul's complete inability to gain self-knowledge, that is, through a gesture of utter humility:

My feet bound by longings,
my arms by cravings,
I am bereft of either power or remedy.
I do not even have the strength to cry out.

ame, esclave, et prisonniere. . . ." Marguerite de Navarre, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, 77, ll. 17–26.

- 22 Ibid., 79, ll. 55–58. Cf. Étienne Gilson, *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, 225: "Ce que l'homme trouve *circa se*, ou *sub se*, l'accable par son étendue; ce qu'il trouve *in se* l'embarasse par son obscurité mais, s'il cherche en soi ce que son être lui apprend de ce qui est *supra se*, il se heurte à un mystère dont l'opacité a de quoi l'effrayer. Le plus grave est qu'il se trouve enveloppé dans ce mystère. Si l'homme est vraiment une image de Dieu, comment se connaîtrait-il sans connaître Dieu? Mais si c'est vraiment de Dieu qu'il est l'image, comment se connaîtrait-il soi-même? L'homme acquiert donc par là une profondeur insoupçonnée des Anciens et qui le rend comme insondable à lui-même. Qui connaît l'esprit de Dieu? Demande l'Apôtre. Et Grégoire de reprendre, dans son sermon sur l'Image: 'Mais moi, je dis en outre: qui connaît son propre esprit?' Sans doute, si notre esprit nous échappe, Dieu nous échappe bien davantage encore, mais nous ne sommes inscrutables à nous-mêmes que parce que nous participons à la profondeur de Dieu. C'est pourquoi, commentant à son tour le texte de Grégoire, Scot Érigène ajoute: L'esprit, en qui toute la force de l'âme consiste, est fait à l'image de Dieu et est le miroir du bien suprême, parce que la forme incompréhensible de l'essence divine s'y reflète d'une manière ineffable et incompréhensible.' [*De divisione naturae*, iv, chpt. xi] Mais pourquoi citer de tels textes, puisque saint Augustin a dit en une formule lapidaire ce qu'il fallait dire? 'Dieu a fait l'homme à son image et ressemblance, dans la pensée: c'est là qu'est l'image de Dieu. C'est pourquoi la pensée elle-même ne peut être comprise, fût-ce par elle-même, en tant qu'elle est image de Dieu.'"

In short, as far in the future as I can see,
 no hope of relief is in sight.
 But grace, which I do not merit,
 and which can raise us all from the clutches of death,
 by its bright light illuminates my darkness,
 and by its great goodness looks upon my flaws.
 Lifting the veil of ignorance,
 it gives me the clear and proper vision
 to see who and what I am,
 where I am and why I strive,
 who is the one I have injured,
 whom I have hardly thought to serve.²³

The mirror metaphor describes the soul's inability to introspect but also, paradoxically, how the gift of faith enables it to "examine" its previously ignored faults. Faith provides "clear understanding" (*clere intelligence*) that Christ on the cross is the image of both man and God, and that He reveals the human soul in both its sin and divinity. The speaker perceives that within, there lie "sinful inclinations,/not the least of which is my tendency to deceive." But, she says, "The more I conceal and hide,/the more my sins gather and grow in my heart."²⁴ Profane secrecy as a fear of divine law not only reveals but also generates further sinfulness. The commandment to obey divine law does not help the sinner; rather, it leads her to break the law and multiply her faults. In this Evangelical discourse, law functions as a mirror for sin to the extent that it reveals hidden corruptions, but it also contributes to proliferating them rather than resolving the problem at its "root." For Pauline and Augustinian thought, Old Testament law does not prevent sin but rather provokes it, creating the wish to further hide from punishment.²⁵ In this point of view, it is only through

23 "... Les piedz liez par sa concupiscence/Et les deux bras par son acoustumance./En moy ne gist le povoir du remede;/Force je n'ay pour bien crier à l'aide./Brief, à jamais, à ce que je puis veoir,/Esperance de fin ne doy avoir/Mais la grace que ne puis meriter/Qui poeut de mort chascun ressusciter/Par sa clarté ma tenebre illumine./Et ma faulte sa vertu examine;/Rompant du tout le voile d'ignorance/Me donne, au vray, bien claire intelligence/Que c'est de moy, et qui en moy demeure,/Qui est celluy le quel j'ay offensé/Auquel si peu de servir j'ay pensé." Marguerite de Navarre, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, 79. ll. 26–42.

24 Ibid., 79, ll. 53–64.

25 Cf. Saint Augustine, *City of God*, Chapter 5: "The apostle, wishing to show how hurtful a thing sin is, when grace does not aid us, has not hesitated to say that the strength of sin is that very law by which sin is prohibited. 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.' [1 Cor. 15:56]. Most certainly true; for prohibition increases the desire of illicit

an interiorization of divine law and through the recognition of Christ as the mirror of both humanity and divinity that the hidden roots of man's sinfulness can be revealed.

The *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* represents the human soul's progress in understanding the mystery of Christ's sacrifice through metaphors of filial adoption, which, as scholars have recognized, occupy an important place in medieval mystical traditions inspired by Greek and Latin patristic philosophy in general and Rhineland spiritual thought in particular.²⁶ The poem's speaker uses metaphors of filiation and family relations (sisterly, brotherly, fatherly, motherly, marital, etc.) to meditate on the meaning of her initial illumination and the significance of Christ's incarnation. These metaphors of family, filiation, and kinship represent the speaker's attempt to bridge the soul's "estrangement" and "alienation" from spiritual self-knowledge. The metaphors poetically translate the mystical doctrine according to which the divine Word becomes engendered in the human mind, "confirming" Christ "in us" through a charitable love that "ravishes and transforms" us "in him."²⁷ The Holy Spirit's gift of light gives

action, if righteousness is not so loved that the desire of sin is conquered by that love. But unless divine grace aids us, we cannot love nor delight in true righteousness. But lest the law should be thought to be an evil, since it is called the strength of sin, the apostle, when treating a similar question in another place, says, "The law indeed is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is holy made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." [Rom. 7:12, 13]. Cf. Rom. 3:19–20; 4:13–15; 4:20–21; 7:7–12; 1 Cor. 15:56. All passages are cross-indexed in the *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*.

- 26 For a philosophical and theological history of the doctrine of the divine Word's genesis in the human mind, from Albertus Magnus through the tradition of Rhineland mysticism, see Alain de Libera, *La mystique rhénane: d'Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994). On possible sources for these metaphors in the tradition of Rhineland mysticism, see Emile Parturier's (insightful but now dated) article, "Les sources du mysticisme de Marguerite de Navarre: à propos d'un manuscrit inédit," *Revue de la Renaissance* 5 (1904): 1–16; 49–62.
- 27 "When I think of what inspires/You to love me, charity is all/I see, which incites you/To give me what I do not deserve./Thus my Lord, as far as I can see,/I must attribute my salvation/To you alone, whom I must honor/As my God, creator, and savior./But what is this? You do so much for me./And still you are not satisfied/To have pardoned my sins/And granted me the generous gift of grace./It would have been understandable, enduring such danger,/That you should treat me like an outsider./But, if I may say so, you treat my soul/Like that of a mother, daughter, sister, and wife." Marguerite de Navarre, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, 85, ll. 157–172.

the believer a self-knowledge about the nature of sinfulness and divinity that draws the soul into kinship with Christ.

Justification, for Marguerite, thus marks an initiation into the secrets of faith, into knowledge of God's transcendent nature, and through this knowledge, into divine charity. Divine illumination allows the soul to perceive its hidden faults in Christ as in a mirror. This mirror represents the union of human corruption with divine charity, and the metaphors of vision associated with the mirror serve to portray the speaker's renewed promise and capacity to live in accordance with the dictates of Christian life a second time (the first being symbolically performed through baptism, as a form of illumination). This illumination rehabilitates the soul by granting it not only knowledge but also the faith that Christ on the cross is both the image of man's sin and of his perfection.

As the poetic speaker meditates on the meaning of Christ's incarnation and becomes illuminated into its significance, she recognizes that Christ sees her in blinded suffering in the "depths of hell." Although poor, ignorant, and impotent, she becomes "rich" in Christ as he beholds her. As this occurs, a reversal of values takes place: the speaker now shares in the honors, profits, and pleasures of divine goodness. The "message of your spirit," the speaker says, "and your sacred word" allow her to "receive" the spirit, which reveals Christ to be both man and God, Savior and Redeemer, and assures her that her soul participates in God's "honor," "wealth and riches," and pleasure.²⁸ The search for honors, profits, and pleasures thus shifts from a profane to a spiritual value. This is achieved through God's secret operations; divine love does not remain "dormant or inactive" but rather works to "beget" the recognition that the soul's "true paternity" lies in God through Christ as intermediary, which converts it from its attachments to profane values. Divine being communicates itself secretly through charity in the soul, emerging from a space of alterity and transforming the indigence of worldly desires into the plenitude of divine will.²⁹

In the Augustinian tradition that informs Marguerite's poetic works, secrecy relates closely to the ideas of divine pardon, contrition, and penitence. The image of the cover serves to convey these ideas. Through initiation into

28 Ibid., 79, ll. 180–85; ll. 215–225.

29 "By his own will, he makes an ache/in my heart so unbearable/that it postulates the gift whose very meaning/is well beyond my understanding./And at present this mysterious uneasiness/produces a new longing./and reveals the wishes I had forsaken/for my transgressions, given/and bestowed upon me once again through grace and compassion/which conquers and subdues all sin." Ibid., 81, ll. 83–92.

Christian secrecy, the soul enters mystical union, or filial adoption, in divine mystery as God “covers” its sins. The speaker performs an act of poetic, sacrificial praise by recognizing that her longings direct her to Christ, who both reveals and also covers human sinfulness. She invokes various metaphors of family attachment to describe Christ’s renewing power to “cover” her soul:

O brother, father, child and husband,
 with hands joined, humbly on my knees
 I, dirt, ashes, filth, give thanks,
 praise, glory, and honor,
 for which it pleases you to transform and convert my heart.
 You wrap me so well in grace
 that all the sins and errors of which I am guilty
 you cannot see, for you have hidden them so well.
 You hide them such that they seem forgotten by you
 and by me, who have committed them.
 May faith and love help me to forget
 and may I place in you alone all my hopes.³⁰

Metaphors of filiation describe the soul’s movement beyond the order of worldly goods. The self-love (*amour propre*) that motivates the search for honors, profits, and pleasures formerly rendered the speaker similar to a “thief” hidden in the solitude of shame. She projected her own malice onto the surrounding world, covering it with the “infection” of her sins and blinding herself to her own moral indigence in so doing.³¹ Nonetheless, these worldly pulsions become “extinguished” by charity; charitable love and living faith (*vive foy*) enter the speaker’s soul and dissipate the fear (*crainte*) that previously led her to hide herself in the isolation and solitude of self-love and prevented her from recognizing Christ as both the disclosure and concealment of divine wisdom.³² Through Christ as intermediary, God “covers” man’s sins and “looks” only to the grace that is “enclosed” within the human soul, thereby

30 “O mon frère, pere, enfant, et espoux,/Les mains jointes, humblement à genoulz,/Graces vous rendz, mercy gloire et louenge,/Dont il vous plaist moy terre, cendre, et fange,/Mon cueur à tourner et convertir;/Et de grace si bien me revestir;/Et me couvrir, que mes mauix et pechez/Ne voiez plus, tant les avez cachez,/Si que de vous semblent en oubly mys,/Voire et de moy qui les ay tous commis,/Foy et amour m’en donnent oubliance,/Mettant du tout en vous seul ma fiance.” Ibid., 95, ll. 367–378.

31 Ibid., 111, ll. 697–698; p. 115, ll. 766–780.

32 Ibid., 117, ll. 781–804. On “vive foi” and other related expressions, see Isabelle Garnier with Isabelle Pantin, “Opening and Closing Reflections,” 151.

dissipating its “ugliness” and remaking it into a new spiritualized creature (*me refaict creature nouvelle*).³³ The poet thus moves from secrecy as self-love towards a more originary secrecy that remains shrouded in the incomprehensibility of God’s charitable, unilateral gift of faith until her soul becomes filled with the light of divine charity:

Raising my eyes on high,
 I perceive in you unheard-of kindness
 grace and love so incomprehensible,
 that I am blinded, made to turn away,
 to turn my sight downward.
 And thus looking, I see what I am
 and what I wanted to be.
 I see the unsightliness of my misconduct,
 darkness and a great abyss
 my death, my emptiness, my meaninglessness.
 I shut my eyes in humility.³⁴

The metaphorical act of lifting one’s gaze upwards describes the renewal of spiritual vision, yet this renewal can only be ecstatic in nature—in other words, temporary—and thus moves dialectically back and forth across the boundaries of the worldly and the divine. Attaining knowledge of divine perfection,

33 Marguerite de Navarre, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, 119, ll. 831–840.

34 “Las! Qu’est cecy? Jettant en hault ma veue,/Je voy en vous bonté si incongneue,/Grace et amour si incomprehensible,/Que la veue m’en demeure invisible,/Et par force faict mon regard cesser,/Qui me contrainct en bas mes yeulx baisser./A l’heure, voy en ce regard terrestre,/Ce que je suis et ce qu’ay voulu estre./Helas! Je voy de mes maulx la laydeur,/L’obscurité, l’extreme profondeur,/Ma mort, mon rien, et ma nichilité,/Qui rend mon oeil clos par humilité. . .” Ibid., ll. 853–865. Commentators have noted that the act of raising one’s eyes relates directly to the idea of recovering from blindness in the New Testament through the greek word *anablepein*, which can mean either to lift one’s sight or to regain vision from blindness (cf. Matthew 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43). For Augustine, whereas beatifying vision is direct, the creed is like a mirror: “Call your faith to mind, look at yourself; treat your creed as your own personal mirror. Observe yourself there, if you believe all the things you confess to believing, and rejoice everyday in your faith. . . . But when we come to that place where we are going to reign, there will be no need for us to say the creed. We shall see God, God himself will be our vision; the vision of God will be the reward of this faith.” Saint Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, ed. O.S.A. John E. Rotelle, trans. O.S.B. Edmund Hill, O.P., 124. Briçonnet wrote to Marguerite “... it seems that the whole life of a Christian, which in and of itself is blind, must be to learn to see, rectify, and clarify his vision.” *Correspondance*, vol. 14, 183.

for Marguerite, simultaneously projects the soul backward onto an awareness of its nothingness. Ecstatic rapture does not abolish blindness but confers awareness thereof and, in so doing, discloses the path to divine pardon as one that necessitates the avowal of moral corruption. Christ, in this perspective, is a doubly reflective mirror because He reflects both human abjection and human dignity. With these ideas, Marguerite's *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* rearticulates fundamental mystical doctrines that Briçonnet had formulated some ten years earlier.

In keeping with Briçonnet's mystical theology, the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* represents acts of humility and self-mortification as a process of emptying the soul in imitation of Christ's kenosis, thereby leaving an open, vacuous space within the human soul that prepares it to receive an infusion of grace from the Holy Spirit. By becoming "nothing," the soul renders itself receptive to the reflection of both Christ's humanity and divinity. This avowal of inner nothingness uncovers the secret of divinity that lies "enclosed" within the soul.³⁵

This brings about a reversal in the mirror metaphor: it is not the human soul that sees its reflection in the mirror of Christ but rather Christ who sees himself through the eyes of the human soul. The visionary metaphor reverses itself: when the Holy Spirit inhabits the soul and fills its inner vacuity with charitable love through the experience of ecstatic rapture, the human persona does not behold itself in the mirror of Christ; rather, the divinity becomes the agent of human vision. Confession of one's nothingness (*néant*) uncovers the soul's hidden dignity, thereby allowing God to see Himself reflected in the image of mankind. The human soul becomes comparable to a mirror because it conforms to the image of Christ on the cross. Christ is the image of God through

35 "Is there a love, compared with this one,/which is not contemptible?/Is there a pleasure worthy of the name?/Is there an honor which should not be called a shame?/Is there any profit that one should esteem?/In short, is there anything in the world I could have loved more?/Indeed not. To the one who loves God,/All these mundane achievements are worth less than dung./Pleasure, success, honor are like a heavy chore/to those who have found the love of God." The French text reads as follows: "Est il amour auprès de ceste cy,/ Qui trop pleine ne soit de maulvais si?/Est il plaisir dont l'on poeust tenir compte?/Est il honneur que l'on n'estime à honte?/Est il prouffit que l'on doye estimer?/Brief, est il rien que plus je sceusse aymer?/Helas! Nenny, car tous ces mondains biens,/Qui ayme Dieu, repete moins que fientz./Plaisir, prouffit, et honneur sont corvee/A qui l'amour de son Dieu a trouvee./Amour de Dieu est si plaisant prouffit,/Et tant d'honneur que seule au cuer suffit./Elle rend content (je le puis dire)/Tant que riens plus ne veult ny ne desire;/ Car qui ha Dieu, ainsi qu'il le commande,/Oultrageux est qui aultre bien demande." Marguerite de Navarre, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, 125, ll. 957–966. See also 128, ll. 1049–1064, where these passions are described as pulsions towards death.

which the human soul becomes deified. The human soul purges its “ugliness” by avowing its sins, but it is ultimately God who becomes the agent of vision as He sees his perfection in and through the soul. Mystical ecstasy metaphorically cleans the tarnished image of God such that God can behold himself anew in its reflection. Rehabilitated, the soul becomes the likeness of God; it becomes deified, restored as an image, and thus a transparent medium through which the divine gaze can recognize its own infinite wisdom, seeing itself in perfect clarity in ways that remain secret to all but Him.

In Marguerite’s poetics of reform, the profane meaning of secrecy as a state of solitude and self-love transforms into transparency and openness. This transparency characterizes the relationships between God and the *Logos*, the *Logos* and the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit and the inspired writings of Scripture. The poem’s speaker performs a sacrifice of personal authority by confessing her nothingness and thereby accedes to the secrets of divine wisdom, which remain obscured and protected from profane eyes. Marguerite writes that, in such vision, God alone is agent of the gaze:

He loves himself in me and by loving me,
he fills my heart with love.
In such loving he makes himself to be so loved
that its consequence (not mine) brings him joy.
Making himself happy, he endlessly multiplies
greater love than love can give.³⁶

Here, the speaker describes how the human soul does not experience the love of God, but rather it is God who loves himself through the medium of the soul. This experience, however, depends on the soul first being self-annihilated in sacrificial praise through the avowal of sin. By confessing its nothingness in comparison with God’s infinite totality, the soul recognizes that God is beyond all worldly things and that He is thus not any created thing. God is not any particular thing; He is rather the eternal totality (*Tout*) of all beings and things, but without being identifiable with any particular one of them. Thus while He is not any thing, He is simultaneously all things, as I discuss further below in examining *The Prisons*.

36 “Il s’ayme donc en moy et par m’aymer,/Il faict mon cueur par amour enflammer./Par ceste amour il se faict aymer tant,/Que son effect (non moy) le rend content./Se contentant, tousjours il multiplie/Trop plus d’amour, qu’amour ne luy supplie.” Ibid., 143, ll. 1307–1310.

Through a dialectical logic that is inspired by Augustinian and pseudo-Dionysian theologies, Marguerite conceives of poetic praise in terms of mystical and invisible sacrifice, which is achieved by recognizing that the sinful soul is nothing by comparison with the divine. For Marguerite, this acknowledgment acts as a form of symbolic recognition that God is infinite and transcendent in His goodness, wisdom, and power:

But when by love one is brought into union,
The small amount of the infinite so fills the finite
That one is not able to perceive its limits.
One so overflows with its content
That one thinks to contain the entire universe.³⁷

The nature of this experience of divine infinity, through the relation of part to whole, becomes subject to confusion as the sinful self attempts to comprehend its significance. Marguerite describes this through a poetic rendering of the theory of *synderesis*, or as I discussed in earlier chapters, the soul's divine spark:

When a single ray of the sun blinds the eye,
it does not reveal its fullest power.
But ask the eye what it has felt
and it will say everything; but it lies.
For blinded by a little light,
it cannot see the whole thing.
And yet it is so satisfied
That it seems, were it to have still more,
it would not be able to endure
that light whose limits it cannot measure.³⁸

37 "Mais quant à luy par amour est unie,/Si remply est son riens d'ung peu de tout,/Qu'à declairer ne poeut trouver le bout./Plus ha de bien qu'il n'en poeut soustenir, parquoy il croit tout le monde tenir." Ibid., 143, ll. 1324–1329.

38 "Quant le soleil d'un seule estincelle/Aveugle l'oeil, sa grand lumiere celle;/Mais demandez à l'oeil qu'il a senty;/Il dira tout; mais il aura menty;/Car aveuglé de petite lumiere,/Il ne poeut veoir la grand clarté entiere;/et demeure toutesvoies si content,/Qu'il luy semble s'il en avoit autant,/N'estre puissant pour endurer/Ceste clarté qu'il ne poeut mesurer." Ibid., 142, ll. 1331–1340. Philip Ford discusses the image of the spark in Marguerite, Briçonnet, and Ficino, speculating about the possible relations between them, in his essay "Neo-Platonic Themes of Ascent in Marguerite de Navarre," 96–97.

The soul's divine spark (*scintille de Dieu*) momentarily unites itself with the divine, but this experience of divine light within the temporal world remains incommensurate with the experience of the divine light itself. In a letter, Briçonnet taught Marguerite (using an Eckartian and Cusan metaphor) that light only acquires color when it shines upon objects.³⁹ To attain the purity and invisibility of light itself, in this view, one must learn to see beyond all created objects. To be illuminated, the soul must empty itself of all worldly representations. But Marguerite's poem warns that created objects can nevertheless become mistaken for the light itself; in other words, the disproportion between the divine and the human (*de l'infiny à la chose finie*)⁴⁰ can, as the poem suggests, lead the soul to misrecognize what it gains in mystical experience.

In the initial stages of mystical ascent as the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul* represents it, the soul at first mistakenly believes that it has attained beatitude and deification, because it has been so starved of goodness that its initial encounter with divine charity misleads it into believing it has already attained infinite goodness. But this initial experience further leads the soul to an awareness of its own finitude and, thus, to grief concerning what it does not and cannot yet possess. The temporary illumination of the soul by the Holy Spirit discloses the understanding that worldly life and possessions are nothing in comparison to the hidden treasures of God.

Yet, as the speaker describes it, the divinity continues to remain secret even as the soul experiences its goodness. The divine light or fire remains so "great and so terrible," "so soft and so good" that the soul does not recognize that it is a gift of grace.⁴¹ This partial dispensation of light appeases the soul's desires and appetites, filling them with satisfaction. But it also creates a further desire for beatitude, which the soul remains incapable of representing:

The heart realizes that it has gathered in too much,
but has developed such a powerful desire,
that it wishes for more
than it can either absorb or that it merits.

39 Cf. Guillaume Briçonnet and Queen Marguerite, *Correspondance*, vol. 141, 184 ff. On this, see also Nicholas of Cusa, "Dialogue on the Hidden God," in *Selected Spiritual Writings* (New York; Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 213. Nicholas of Cusa, "On Seeking God," in *Selected Spiritual Writings*, ed. H. Lawrence Bond (New York; Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 218. See also Anca Vasiliu, *Du diaphane. Image, milieu, lumière dans la pensée antique et médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1997).

40 Marguerite de Navarre, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, ll. 1323–1328.

41 *Ibid.*, 142, ll. 1341–1342. Translation mine.

Appreciating its ineffable pleasure,
 it longs for more of what it does not understand.
 It cannot comprehend its true happiness
 and thus cannot express its feelings.
 It is incapable of putting it into words,
 Inasmuch as it has no understanding of this ardor.
 He knows well enough how to define love
 Who knows how to hold so much of it in his heart.
 Happy he who has so much
 That he can say: God, I have enough.
 Whoever possesses this love dares not speak of it,
 (fearing to lose it)
 save for the edification
 and salvation of his neighbor.
 Thus the impossible will keep me silent.⁴²

The experience of charitable love quells the lust for honors, profits, and pleasures. This experience of impossibility silences the poetic speaker, who asserts her inability to speak beyond her limits about infinite love, without, as she says, lowering her eyes and closing her mouth in humility. God's transcendent nature constrains human speech and knowledge to a silence that defines the mystical union of the faithful. The experience of Christian secrecy reveals the impossibility of limiting the divine and thereby reveals Scripture to be a gift of grace that alone can raise the poet's awareness of God.

For Marguerite, as for Lefèvre d'Etaples and Briçonnet before her, Saint Paul's rapture allowed him to speak the absolute secrets of Christian wisdom.⁴³ Marguerite takes Saint Paul's Epistles to the Romans as a unique model for disclosing messianic secrecy. The poet praises Paul for representing the

42 "Le cueur sent bien que trop il a recue;/Mais tel desir en ce trop a conceu,/Qu'il desire tousjours à recepvoyr/Ce qu'il ne poeut, ny n'est digne d'avoir./Indicible connoist estre son bien,/Et vault le plus, où il ne congnoist rien./Sentir ne poeut quel est son bien vrayement,/Et si ne poeut penser son sentiment./Le dire donc n'est pas en sa puissance./Puis que du feu il n'ha la congnoissance./Amour sçait bien, au vray, diffinir/Qui la cuide tant en son cueur tenir;/Bieneureux est qui en ha tel excès/Qu'il poeut dire: Mon Dieu, j'en ay assez./Qui l'a en soy, il n'en sçauroit parler://(Craignant, partant, de la laisser aller)/Si non faisant l'edification/De son prochain, à sa salvation." *Ibid.*, 145, ll. 1349–1367.

43 "O most wonderful Saint Paul, you who are so wise,/you astonish us that your words go no further/in interpreting divine mysteries." "O bon saint Paul, voz paroles nous font/Bien esbahir, que vous si tressçavant/D'un tel secret ne parlez plus avant." *Ibid.*, 147, ll. 1393–1396. Cf. Acts 2 and 2 Cor. 1:2

incomprehensibility of divine judgments in speech. This secrecy, the poet writes, serves to make man love what he can desire but neither declare, nor name, nor see, nor think, nor feel with mortal eyes. Faith alone, the poet writes, can “engender” divine charity.⁴⁴ Through the Holy Spirit’s gift of charity, God comes to inhabit the soul, or, as Marguerite writes,

He lives in us, and we in him;
 we are all in him and he is in us.
 And if we possess him through faith,
 such possession is not within our power to define.
 Since so great an apostle
 as Saint Paul says no more,
 following his example,
 I am silent. But according to his promise
 (though I be but dust and dirt),
 I cannot fail to give thanks
 For the many undeserved blessings
 He deigns to bestow on his Marguerite.⁴⁵

The speaker’s reference to the name Marguerite here refers both to the word “pearl,” signifying the secret pearl of wisdom that Paul discovered in his ecstatic rapture, and to the author’s own name.

The Prisons

Marguerite’s poem *The Prisons* (1547, two years before her death) shows that until the end of her life, she continued to reflect in literary form on the nature of mysticism and secrecy. The poem depicts a male lover reflecting on the grief and suffering that he experienced as a result of his love for a lady and how he became freed from his attachments to her but continued to struggle

44 Marguerite again refers to 1 John 4 in defining God as charity.

45 “Il est en nous, et trestous en luy sommes./Tous sont en luy, et luy en tous les hommes./ Si nous l'avons par foy, tel est l'avoir,/Que le dire n'est en nostre pouvoir./Donques, puis qu'un si tresgrand apostre/Comme saint Paul n'a voulu parler oultre,/A l'exemple de sa tressage escolle,/Je tairay, mais suyvant sa parolle/(Bien que pouldre je me confesse et fanges)/Ne puis faillir à rendre la louenge/De tant de biens qu'avoir je ne merite,/Qui luy plaist faire de moy sa Marguerite.” Marguerite de Navarre, *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, 147, ll. 1419–1430.

with them until he experienced freedom through mystical rapture. The poem openly announces its subject matter as human attachment to, and detachment from, worldly matters. It is thus easy to see why Marguerite would integrate Augustinian and medieval Beguine mysticism into *The Prisons*; those models enabled her, as I discuss further below, to articulate a poetic and spiritual language on the nature of attachment and mystical detachment.⁴⁶

The Prisons situates secrecy on both secular and sacred levels by representing it in terms of courtship and devotion. The poem recounts how the world of courtly love entrapped the speaker in fantasies about the lady he courted and from whom he eventually becomes liberated through religious experience. The speaker suffered from his attachment to the lady (*Amye*), idealizing her but then also sinking into deep difficulty over what he perceived to be her mutability. In retrospect, the speaker realizes that his suffering was imprisoning him, enclosing him in a world of fantasies pertaining to time, mutability, courtly love, and self-love. Charity transforms him; he recounts how the Holy Spirit's light pierced through his prison and darkness, liberating him from his courtly love. Once this self-imposed prison crumbles, he transfers his erotic fantasies elsewhere, onto other pursuits, sublimating them into curiosities about the three worlds of nature, human civilization, and knowledge. The poem sheds a humanist and Evangelical light on courtly conventions of secrecy—a tension that extends into the *Heptameron*, as I discuss in Chapter 4.

Although the poem's speaker experiences an initial effect of grace early and suddenly, he continues to commit errors and to convert over time, progressing through a series of misunderstandings about the nature of charitable love.⁴⁷ The pursuit of honors, profits, and pleasures first seduces the speaker and then leads him to realize that, beneath the desire for worldly goods and

46 On the metaphor of the prison in Marguerite's work, see George Mallery Masters, "La libération des prisons structurées: *Les Prisons* de Marguerite de Navarre," in *International Colloquium Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Birth of Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. Régine Reynolds-Cornell (Birmingham, AL: Summa, 1995), 111–122. See also Lisa Hopkins, "Renaissance Queens and Foucauldian Carcerality," *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 20, 2 (1996): 17–32 and Philip Ford, "Patterns of Ascent," 94–96.

47 For a recent study of conversion in Marguerite de Navarre's *The Prisons*, see Cynthia Skenazi, "Les Prisons' Poetics of Conversion," in Ferguson and McKinley, *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 211–235. Skenazi overviews the history of the text in light of its literary, philosophical, and religious culture, tracing the idea of the prison from Briçonnet's letters into *The Prisons* and arguing that the poem reflects on the "power of literature to engender the reader's quest for God's love." She shows that, in addition to the Augustinian model for conversion, Dante's *Divine Comedy* also provided Marguerite with an important example of conversion in poetic form.

pleasures there lies an experience of inner nothingness. This recognition leads him towards freedom from the prisons of courtly and worldly love. Ignoring his inner nothingness, he had wished to find something better outside of himself. But by experiencing nothingness, the speaker paradoxically comes to realize the fullness of being, the power of detachment, and a sense of charity towards the lady he once loved as an object and idol of profane devotion. The speaker was at first unaware that his worldly attachments to honors, profits, and pleasures were merely covers and outlets for a deeper suffering, but he later realizes that his attachments had inverted his perception of good and evil:

Then did the darkness seem to bring me light
 And sunlight was as darkness and deep gloom;
 I cried and wept but thought I laughed and sang,
 While iron doors enclosing me, with bolts
 And bars, grilles, chains and walls of stoutest stone,
 More grateful were to me than open fields.⁴⁸

The speaker's desire for cover represents his need to find assurance from his lady. But this desire leads him to fear the world outside, keeping him in the solitude of a self-erected, "unbreakable barrier" (*ferme closture*). He retrospectively describes this solitude as a "cruel imprisonment" (*cruel prison*), a "cruel torment" (*cruel torment*), "shackles" (*enchainement*), and a sense of deep "alienation" from reality (*sens aliéné*).⁴⁹ His attachment to profane values led him to misperceive his prison as a source of felicity and delight.

As in the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, grace acts in *The Prisons* in the soul's hidden depths and suffering. It acts in a sudden and initial moment, defamiliarizing customary experiences and perceptions until the soul reaches a full illumination that discloses the secrets of Christian wisdom. Nonetheless, although the speaker's initial illumination begins to free him, his fear continues to haunt him. Time reveals that his fantasies are not real, leading him to fear his finite condition.⁵⁰ The reliability of the poem's autobiographical point of view, which reconstructs the history of his attachments and detachments,

48 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons of Marguerite de Navarre*, trans. Hilda Dale (Reading: Whiteknights, 1989), 1, ll. 7–9. "Tenebre lors me sembloit lumineuse/Et le soleil lumiere tenebreuse ;/Larmes et pleurs j'estimoys riz et chantz,/Et si trouvoys plus plaisans que les champs/D'estre enfermé entre ferrées portes,/Grilles, carreaux, chaines et pierres fortes." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, ed. Simone Glasson (Geneva: Droz, 1978), 75, ll. 7–11.

49 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 1–6, ll. 1–180.

50 Ibid., 6, ll. 185–186.

is never called into question. Its speaker asserts with conviction that God, who remains truly unknown except to Himself, gave him the will to leave his initial state of imprisonment. This liberation manifests itself as rays of divine light breaking through the prison's walls and through their seemingly impenetrable cover. God, he says, exposed his lady's mutable (*muable*) nature, giving him the opening (*ouverture*) to escape. Although he remained solely attached to her, she manipulated him. Ultimately, his love service to her imprisoned him in an endless dialectic of fear and hope, which the revelation of Christian charity begins to dispel.

Courtly secrecy fails as a result of inconstancy. The speaker's courtship ends on account of his lady's mutability. "No," he writes to his lady,

... your inconstancy alone it was
That sought to throw my prison open wide;
Not in one day, nor in a single week,
But gradually, through Time that built those walls,
You would destroy them for your benefit."⁵¹

The lady's inconstancy slowly destroys his devotion and leads him to disillusionment. Despite its failure, this experience of courtly love nonetheless serves as a bridge towards Christian charity. Courtly love becomes a typological figure for Christian love. The sun's light first enters through a crack and metaphorically pierces the speaker's "cover" of self-deception and solitude. It enters his eye, filling him with beauty, but its beauty devastates him with grief and suffering. The light gives the speaker insight into the nature of his suffering in self-imposed imprisonment and into the way he mistook suffering for bliss.⁵²

Secrecy and time occupy central places in the narrative: the woman's inconstancy destroys the prison walls he built gradually through time. Her manipulation of courtly conventions eventually destroys the faithfulness that the speaker built and expressed by keeping his love perfectly secret. As his disillusionment with courtly love and secrecy develops, he first rejects the light illuminating his prison and covers his eyes. He begins working day and night to sustain the illusion that his suffering is pleasure and to maintain his prison

51 Ibid., ll. 212–214. "Mais Cestuy là . . ./Fist vostre cueur, pour mon bien, si muable/Qu'il proposa, non par voye amyable,/Me delivrer, non pour ma liberté,/Mais par sa trop grande legereté,/De ma prison, pour ouverture plaine ;/Non en ung jour, ny en une sepmaine,/Mais peu à peu, par le temps qui la fist,/La voulut donc deffaire à son prouffit." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 82. l. 203, ll. 207–214.

52 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 7, l. 226.

walls in defiance of time, in the hope of resting there eternally. This attempt to build perfect friendship on the basis of female inconstancy fails, and his resistance to the allegorical figure of “Lady time” proves futile; the prison walls break and release, forcing him to recognize that he had projected “beauty” onto “ugliness,” “health” onto “sickness,” and that he had inverted the proper hierarchy of profane and spiritual values.⁵³ The speaker’s solitude in *The Prisons* serves to protect him from the metaphorical “arrows” and “darts” of other worldly attachments. But the poem depicts the transmutation of loyalty into distrust and an undoing of courtly bonds, as the speaker’s grievances intensify: he reflects how the lady used attachments to control him and how he feared to have an attachment other than to her for fear of shattering the ideal that he associated with her. He protected himself from the world for fear of losing his lover’s heart, love and assurance (*seureté*).⁵⁴

From the point of view of the Evangelical conversion that the speaker undergoes, courtly love and secrecy represent solitude and fantasy. As the speaker begins to see that time reduces all things to nothingness and annihilates all things equally, he experiences surprise—it is such a “strange thing,” he reflects, that it cannot be believed or accepted. For the speaker, the unfamiliar (*estrangé*) challenges one’s sense of self. Secrecy in this way becomes associated with reversals of familiarity and unfamiliarity.⁵⁵ Although the speaker was, as he says, at first a “prisoner of myself,”⁵⁶ the sun’s “strange” fire begins to burn away his solitude, piercing through the cover of his self-imposed secrecy and drawing him towards a revelation of Christian secrecy that supplants the solitude of imprisonment. The sun’s light reveals that his lover’s cruelty and her desire to control motivate inconstancy. His lady’s lack of mercy (*sans mercy*) and the secrecy she was using as a pretext for inconstancy are exposed as cruelty, but they also allow him to move beyond courtly secrecy to a spiritual notion of universal secrecy that encompasses all worldly matters.⁵⁷ *The Prisons*

53 Ibid., 7–8, ll. 253–255; ll. 269–270.

54 Ibid., 8, ll. 280–284.

55 Ibid., 9, ll. 303–312; l. 318. On the semantics of secrecy and its relations to the ideas of interior space, the canny and the uncanny (*unheimlich*), see Hildegard Elisabeth Keller’s important work, “Segreti. Uno studio semantico sulla mistica femminile medievale,” *Storia delle donne* 1 (2005): 201–220. Keller’s article contains extensive bibliography on secrecy and mystery in the medieval mystical tradition, including discussion of Georg Simmel’s *Sociology: Inquiries Into the Construction of Social Forms*, trans. Anthony J. Blasi et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009) and Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God. Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

56 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 9, l. 322.

57 Ibid., 11, ll. 375–390.

represents a Renaissance, Evangelical imitation and transformation of medieval courtly culture and literature that explores the significance and functions of courtly secrecy.

Having had an initial epiphany into the nature of his suffering, the speaker expresses his desire for the sun to reveal his prison's interior.⁵⁸ The prison becomes illuminated, whereupon the speaker recognizes his blindness. The illusory belief that he can find enduring assurance (*ferme sureté*), to which he once clung, now becomes uncovered and exposed as having no firm basis, because all things are subject to mutability. His eyes open to behold the ruins and ugliness, the "sweet poison" that surrounds him; he awakens to see the signs that "too wild a joy" (*fol plaisir*) overcame his senses, immersing him in fantasy.⁵⁹ The speaker realizes that he sacrificed his liberty in "voluntary servitude":

Oh, you were chains indeed, those glances, soft
 Yet crooked too, which so transfixed my heart
 That, feigning pity and with gentle hand,
 You led it, bound more firmly than by ropes,
 Now here, now there, and always as you pleased,
 For it was ever glad to do your will.
 Those bonds, it seemed to me were all of gold
 And, loving and adoring you so much,
 It was my greatest joy, my happiness,
 To let my eyes be always fixed on you. . . .⁶⁰

The mirror image reappears here in reference to the trappings of courtly love; the speaker thought that the law of courtly love (*la loy d'amytié*) demanded that he preserve his attachment to his lady, but he laments

O covering roof, protection and disguise,
 What sly deception, what pretense is here!

58 Ibid., 12, l. 410.

59 Ibid., 12, ll. 415–426.

60 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 13, ll. 461–470. "O gros lyens, doulx regardz traversans,/ Qui dans mon cueur fustes si transpersans,/Que doucement, lyé myeux que de corde,/ Soubz vostre trop faincte misericorde,/Le conduysiez là où il vous plaisoit/-Car volontiers en tout vous complaisoit-/Je vous ay veuz, ce me semble, dorez,/Je vous ay tant aymez et adorez,/Que en ce temps là ne povoys avoir myeux/Que de myrer en vousmesmes mes yeulx." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 91, ll. 461–470. Note that line 470 might alternatively be translated as "Than to see my own eyes mirrored in you."

... No bolt or bar
 Is lost; before my eyes it stands intact
 And still fast closed: indeed it must be so,
 For come what may and whatsoever hurt
 A lover may endure, the only way
 To keep alive the fires of perfect love
 Is by concealment.⁶¹

The speaker was, as he ultimately discovers through spiritual revelation, mistaken about the spiritual importance of Christian secrecy and charity, because of his experience with courtly love.

Courtly Secrets Undone

The Prisons resituates courtly secrecy in an Evangelical poetic and fictional framework. Throughout the medieval courtly tradition, which Marguerite knew well, secrecy relates directly to issues of prudence; courtiers dissimulate, screen, and mask their passions to protect and increase their loved one's honor. Secrecy enables love service to serve as an ethical paradigm, as I discuss further in Chapter 4. Marguerite's *Heptameron* draws extensively on this tradition, as we see in the discussion of the seventieth story, which imitates the *Châtelaine de Vergi*, which is a *locus classicus* for the topic of courtly secrecy and the risks associated with it. In the narrators' dialogue about the seventieth story, Dagoucin asks,

If their love was as virtuous and noble as your account depicts it,' said [Geburon], 'then why did it have to be kept so secret?' 'Because,' replied Parlamente, 'men are so malicious that they can never believe that great love and virtue can be joined together, for they make judgements about vice in men and women in accordance with their own passions. And that is why any woman who has a close male friend other than her nearest relatives, needs to talk with him in secret, if she wishes to talk with him for any length of time at all. Whether a lady's love is virtuous or vicious,

61 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 15–16, ll. 537–538; 560–566. "O couverture, ô seure fiction!/O trop double dissimulation!/. . . Nul verroul ne barrière/N'a delaissé: Je le voy tout entier/Et tousjours cloz; las! Il en est mestier,/Car bien celer-quelque cas qu'il advienne,/Ou quelque mal que ung vray amant soustienne-/C'est le seul point qui faict entretenir/Parfaict amour." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 94, ll. 537–538; 94–95, ll. 561–566.

doubt may be cast on her honor, because people only judge by what they see.⁶²

Both in the *Heptameron* and in *The Prisons*, Marguerite adapts medieval courtly secrecy as it is described, for instance, in Andreas Capellanus' *De amore* (ca. 1184–86). Concealment serves to protect reputation, allowing love to “increase,” and it also serves to educate courtiers into prudence and wisdom:

... love cannot lie hidden for long between lovers who are neither circumspect nor sufficiently sensible. So from the start love begins to know no increase, for when it is noised abroad it does not preserve the lover's reputation.⁶³

Similarly, in the medieval and early modern *Querelle des femmes*, which extended through the fifteenth-century literary world in the *Querelle des amies*, Christine de Pizan's *Le livre du duc des vrais amans* (1403–1405) admonishes noble ladies to avoid the “fole amour” that becomes too powerful to be hidden. Women must guard their loves closely through secrecy, lest they become publicly dishonored.⁶⁴ In Castiglione's *The Courtier*, which was translated into

62 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Heptameron*, trans. P.A. Chilton (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 532. The bracket is mine: the Penguin edition attributes these words to Hircan, whereas the edition by Michel François attributes them to Geburon. I have used the Penguin translation here but have replaced Hircan's with Geburon's name (which I have placed between brackets). “Puisque l'amour estoit si honneste, dist Geburon, comme vous nous la paignez, pourquoy la falloit-il tenir si secrette?—Pour ce, dist Parlemeute, que la malice des hommes est telle, que jamais ne pensent que grande amour soyt jointe à honnesteté; car ilz jugent les hommes et les femmes vitieux, selon leurs passions. Et, pour ceste occasion, il est besoing, si une femme a quelque bon amy, oultre ses plus grands prochains parents, qu'elle parle à luy secretement, si elle y veult parler longuement; car l'honneur d'une femme est aussi bien mys en dispute, pour aymer par vertu, comme par vice, veu que l'on ne se prent que ad ce que l'on voyt.” Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, 418.

63 Andreas Capellanus, *De amore et amoris remedio* (London: Duckworth, 1982), I, 6, 3–7.

64 On the transformation of courtly erotic ideals in Evangelically inspired French lyric during the early Renaissance, see Gérard Defaux, “Introduction,” in *Hecatomphe. Les fleurs de poesie française*, ed. Gérard Defaux (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 2002), vi–cxxxv. See also Ullrich Langer and Jan Miernowski, eds. *Anteros: actes du colloque de Madison (Wisconsin), mars 1994*, Collection l'atelier de la Renaissance, vol. 4. (Orléans: Paradigme, 1994) and Gérard Defaux, “Les deux amours de Clément Marot,” *Rivista di letteratura moderna e comparata* 46 (1993): 1–30.

French at King Francis I's request in 1537, Lodovico asserts in response to the idea that "there is no joy in love that is known to all":

... sometimes it does no harm for it to be public knowledge, for in this case people often conclude that it does not seek the object every lover desires, seeing that little care is taken to hide it and there is no concern whether it is known or not. So, by not denying it, a man gains a certain freedom that enables him to speak openly with the one he loves and enjoy her company without arousing suspicion. This is not the case with those who try to keep their love secret, since it seems that they hope for and are about to attain some great reward that they do not want others to discover.⁶⁵

And the Magnifico responds,

Love affairs that are fostered by common talk carry the risk that the man concerned will be pointed out in public; and therefore he who wants to travel this road with caution must pretend to be far less inflamed than he is and must content himself with what he considers too little and dissemble his desires, jealousies, sufferings and joys, often wearing a smile when his heart is breaking and pretending to be prodigal with what he longs to hoard. But these things are so difficult as to be well nigh impossible. So if he wants to take my advice, I would urge our courtier to keep his love secret.⁶⁶

Secrecy initiates, maintains, and augments virtue by protecting the union between courtiers from the misinterpretations and negative judgments that spread with public opinion.

But Marguerite recontextualizes this tradition of secrecy, depicting how courtly love either lacks or potentially leads to spiritual love. Her work contains an anti-courtly element in this sense, and the tension between courtly eroticism and Evangelical secrecy unfolds through the course of *The Prisons*. How does courtly love relate to Christian love, for Marguerite? The answer lies partly in the way the poem's speaker took consolation in knowing that he kept his love perfectly secret. In retrospect, however, he realizes that this desire for courtly secrecy veiled an inability to let his attachment, and the prison he built

65 Baldassar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), 270.

66 Ibid., 270–71.

to protect it, change with time.⁶⁷ The speaker's secrecy and faithfulness contrasts with his lover's mutability, but his experience in the prison of courtly love leads to further narrative sequences that culminate in his ultimate discovery of Christian secrecy and charity. The value of courtly secrecy is thus sublimated and not entirely negated.

In Book 11 of *The Prisons*, the speaker continues the process of liberating himself from courtly secrecy. The courtly decorum that he respectfully observed while courting the lady, by earning her merit through a gradual temporal process, imprisoned him in the illusions of worldly love.⁶⁸ Having been liberated, he begins to wander the world dazzled by the pleasures of its sights. Yet, he unknowingly reproduces his first imprisonment by displacing his desire for "cover" and security. Whereas he started by marveling at the world's natural order, he progresses to a state of wonder at the accomplishments of human civilization. He admires worldly beauties that, he later writes in retrospect, further contributed to covering his inner nothingness, pushing him towards vices. As the speaker progresses through time, he commits errors; the suffering he previously experienced in courtly love returns through a series of narrative sequences governed by the idea of the speaker's perceived need for assurance.

This need possesses the speaker, leading him to manifest his inner nothingness through the misguided desire for gaining and multiplying his riches and worldly honors. He had previously scorned these profane values, but now his search for honors, profits, and pleasures becomes his sole preoccupation, adding yet a further "cover" to his underlying fears of time. In Book 11 of *The Prisons*, these fears transmute into a desire for worldly success as he attempts to cover his spiritual indigence:

So I resolved to try with might and main
Through high position to acquire great wealth
And have abundant store of precious things,
Believing it was right to have that aim;
Yet, to possess them was my only care.
Ambition that would bring me high estate
Seemed reasonable to me because I thought
That virtue lay in the desire to rise
And show to all one's own nobility.
But I was moved by avarice as well
Which hid its evil nature with such art

67 See Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 16, ll. 567–578.

68 Ibid., 1–5, ll. 1–154.

That when I longed for riches and rewards
 I thought it was because I needed them;
 Now honourable estate was what I sought,
 Then office yielding benefits and wealth.
 And so to gain a fortune or high place
 I hid my feelings, my desires and thoughts
 And went a little further on my way.⁶⁹

As in Augustine's *Confessions*, the pursuit of honors, profits, and pleasures masks an inner longing for something that remains separate from the world of profane desires. Secrecy thus gains importance through a series of revelations. The speaker abandons each successive desire that he experiences for a different longing. For example, he begins to visit churches, to practice indulgences, to pray, to sing songs of devotion, to perform religious ceremonies, to take the sacraments, and to respect Church offices. But these worldly practices, he later realizes, fail to fill the vacuum left by the loss of his first "temple," that is, the attachment to his prison of courtly, erotic love. He associates the pursuit of institutionalized religious devotional practices with the charms of "Lady Hypocrisy." He writes that she deceives him into thinking that these worldly practices will bring him remission from sin.⁷⁰ His lover's inconstancy pushes him into the world, leading him to discover dissimulation and moral corruption. Again in retrospect, he perceives the secular world as having no authority or foundation other than Scripture, whose wisdom remains secret from the point of view of the profane world.

In the poem's subsequent narrative sequences, the speaker discovers further ways to fill his inner vacuity, now through the luxuries and pastimes of court life. He enjoys its castles, horses, tourneys, hunts, trumpets, courtesans, beautiful ladies, dances, and songs. This time, however, he becomes stricken by fear (of relapsing back into the cruel tyranny of courtly love), which impels him to escape court life. The speaker's erotic relation to his Lady remains, but

69 Ibid., 24, ll. 173–191. "Dont je concluz de faire mon effort/De ces grans biens par estatatz aquerir,/Et les tresors amasser et querir,/Estimant bien d'en faire mon devoir;/Mais mon soucy n'estoit que d'en avoir./L'Ambition je trouvoys raisonnable/Qui me haulsoit à l'estat honorable,/Cuydant vertu ce desir de haultesse/Qui veult monstrier en tous lieux sa noblesse./D'autre costé me pouissoit Avarice,/Qui si tresbien sçavoit couvrir son vice,/Que en souhaitant biens en diversité,/De tous pensoys avoir nécessité:/Une heure après, ung estat honorable,/Une autre après, ung riche ou prouffitable./Couvrant mon cueur, mon desir, mon penser,/Soit pour gaigner, ou bien pour m'advanser,/Je m'en allay ung petit plus avant." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 103, 174–191.

70 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 104–105, ll. 225–242.

Christian charity continues to secretly convert him through this dynamic process of attachment, discovery, and departure. He continues to cling to his first “honest and pure love” (*amour honneste, amour pure*) as though his lady were divine, and he still suffers his idol’s cruel treatment.⁷¹ He seeks consolation for the loss of his first, perfect love (*parfaicte amour*).⁷² Out of spite, he resolves to become “variable” by covering and hiding his fears, disavowing the value of any attachments. He sees courtship as a mere source of pleasure, “covering” his thoughts with the masks of elegant language, seductive clothes, dancing, music, equestrian skill, and prowess with weapons.⁷³ The poetic narrative thus progresses from an experience of rejection to a gradual awakening to other spheres of experience, through the experience of Christian charity.

We see *The Prisons* participating in Augustinian and earlier modes of humanist Evangelical expression when the speaker redirects his search towards the world of politics and when he marvels at the Godlike power of princes who have profane wealth (pleasures, honors, and profits) beyond comparison.⁷⁴ He learns that the act of turning one’s back on God can bring success in society; it can bring riches and worldly reputation more quickly than honest and diligent work can bring these rewards. He thus begins to amass pleasures, honors, and profits as he conforms to the world around him, using dissimulation to accomplish his hidden intentions.⁷⁵ But there occurs a breaking point in the speaker’s profane itinerary when an anonymous “ancient” man reveals that the speaker’s attachments to worldly goods (honors, profits, and pleasures) surge from a hidden depth of suffering to which he remains blind. The anonymous man discloses the speaker’s hidden troubles and the mortal passions that lie concealed, covered, and unnoticed under the masks of self-deception.⁷⁶ The old man’s spiritual vision pierces through inauthenticity, showing that three “tyrants” and “cruel beasts” (honors, profits, pleasures) govern worldly attachments. He explains that, although the speaker escaped the “very subtle, sweet and pleasant attachment” to his lady, he has become deceived by other illusions.⁷⁷ Charitable love, he reveals, dispels fear and the prisons it creates:

71 Ibid., 27–28, ll. 314–326.

72 Ibid., 26–27, ll. 270; 295–298.

73 Ibid., 28, ll. 331–348.

74 Ibid., 29, ll. 373–382.

75 Ibid., 30, ll. 414–415.

76 Ibid., 32, ll. 487–498.

77 Ibid., 33, ll. 537–540.

True love has such power,
 That he who can have it perfectly
 And fill his heart with it entirely
 Has no torment from desire or fear.
 He who has fear of better and of worse,
 Has never had the living experience of love.⁷⁸

Although the speaker has recognized his lady's mutable, cruel nature, he nonetheless remains "captive," "attached," "taken," "burned," and "tormented" by his grief, which turns him towards worldly goods (pleasures, honors, and profits). The anonymous man shows that, although "blinding folly" leads men to dissimulate with covers, they only lead to further repentance and ultimately to death, because they wither the body, destroy sleep and rest, ruin life and health, and perhaps most insidiously, fool men into believing that evils can be salutary goods. In *The Prisons*, despite his revelations, the anonymous man ultimately leads the speaker astray. The speaker refers to him as the Lover of Knowledge because he is associated with learning and science, which represent the final stage of his spiritual journey towards the disclosure of divine mystery. *The Prisons* moves dialectically between revelations and errors, the last error being the illusion that secrets of knowledge bring felicity.⁷⁹

From that day on, the speaker experiences a new release from the prisons of his desire. Mistakenly, he comes to believe that he is free from the past and that he has stopped projecting his inner vices onto the outer world.⁸⁰ He begins to take solace in reading about virtue and in perceiving nature anew. The experience of initiation into Christian secrecy releases him from the torment and sickness associated with courtly love service.⁸¹ He grows aware of his inner nothingness (*rien*) and begins to realize that embracing Christian charity provides everything (*tout*) he desires. His profane love then undergoes a conversion that transforms his writing's significance. He pens his poem, he writes, to recount the grief and pain caused by the trials of courtly love, to gain further distance from his prison, and to seek his lady's presence, despite their physical distance, through an act of Christian and courtly love.

78 Ibid., 34, ll. 557–560. "Aussi de vray amour a tel pouvoir,/Que qui le peult parfaitement avoir/Et en remplir son cueur entierement,/De nul desir ny craincte n'a tourment./Qui a desir de myeulx et de pis craincte,/N'a jamais eu d'amour la vive attaincte." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 115, ll. 557–562.

79 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 44, l. 943.

80 Ibid., 44, l. 937.

81 Ibid., 45, ll. 991–992.

In the speaker's third epiphany, learning and knowledge come to represent "covers" for his nothingness. His need for covers persists even as he ascends towards an illumination into Scriptural secrets known only to those who breathe the Holy Spirit's charity. His hidden lust for honors, profits, and pleasures transforms into a pursuit of scientific wisdom,⁸² which leads to a discovery of Christ's significance. This revelation occurs as the speaker becomes illuminated into the meaning of Scripture. He learns that Christ descended to mortal flesh and saw human sin in its deceptive resemblance to virtue. Nonetheless, this illumination, he writes, prevents him from further "covering" his sin in yet another prison of self-deception. God, he continues, sees through the hypocrite's heart—through his external deeds—cleaving through the surface of worldly deceit to the "marrow" of "nothingness" that directs men to isolation in the solitude of self-love.⁸³ The Christological "secrets" and "treasures" hidden behind profane learning become disclosed to him:

Now as I read those words there came a light,
A sudden splendour, beautiful to see,
Enfolding me, but to the eye of flesh
Unbearable; its virtue was too great,
Its radiance too bright to be endured.
I closed my eyes and still that cleansing flame
In which all taint of evil is consumed
Was kindled in my heart where love of it
Arose, though eye and mind perceived it not.⁸⁴

After this initial infusion of grace and with the passing of many years and "long experience," the speaker finally undergoes a full conversion when, from the fire of divine light, God discloses His identity to the speaker in the terms set forth by Exodus 3:14:

It was the voice that in the burning bush
Spoke to the waiting shepherd and revealed

82 Ibid., 50, ll. 27–36.

83 Ibid., 60, ll. 429–434; l. 442; l. 448.

84 Ibid., 62, ll. 490–498. "Lisant ce mot, soudain me vint saisir/Une clarté plaisante à veoir et belle;/Mais sa lumiere et vertu estoit telle/Que l'oeil charnel la trouva importable,/Pour estre trop luyante et agreeable./Ce feu par qui tout mal est consummé,/Pour mon oeil cloz ne fut moins alumé/Dedans mon cueur, qui de luy fut espris/Avant que l'oeil l'eust conceu ne compris." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 153, ll. 490–498.

His holy name: 'I am that which I am,
 Whom no man living ever may behold.'
 That voice, that word of life whose breadth and depth
 Remain unseen, unknown by our frail flesh,
 Took hold of me and changed my self, transformed
 So swiftly that I lost my baseless pride. . . .⁸⁵

The inner, hidden nothingness that impelled the speaker through the worlds of nature, society, religion, and science becomes visible through the mirror of Scripture:

For by His words, 'I am that which I am,'
 The Master showed me what I truly was:
 If He is Being, then I cannot say
 That I am anything, except in Him.
 But where, if I am nothing, is my strength,
 Where goodness, confidence, right-mindedness?
 Thus, if He is what is, then I am naught.⁸⁶

The illumination reveals that if being belongs to God alone, then man's identity lies in its absence. From this point of view, the human soul possesses only ontological indigence. Amassing worldly goods (honors, profits, and pleasures)

85 Navarre, *The Prisons*, 63, ll. 517–524 "C'est ceste voix qui au buysson ardant/Fist au Pasteur, qui estoit attendant,/De son Saint Nom la verité sçavoir:/Je suys qui suys, que oeil vivant ne peult veoir:/Ceste voix là, ceste parole vive,/Où nostre chair ne congnoist fondz ne rive,/Me print, [mua] et changea si soudain,/Que je perdis mon cuyder faulx et vain." Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 153, 517–524. On medieval exegetical interpretations of Exodus 3:14 see in particular Émilie Zum Brunn, "L'exégèse augustinienne de 'Ego sum qui sum' et la 'Métaphysique de l'Exode,'" in *Dieu et l'être. Exégèses d'Exode 3, 14 et de Coran 20, 11–24*, ed. Paul Vignaux (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978). See also Francis Ruello, "La mystique de l'Exode selon Thomas Gallus," in *Dieu et l'être*, 141–164. On the Augustinian background for the opposition between being and nothingness, see Émilie Zum Brunn, *St. Augustine: Being and Nothingness*, trans. Ruth Namad (New York: Paragon House, 1988). For a reading of *The Prisons* from the point of view of being and nothingness, see Jan Miernowski, "La parole entre l'Être et le Néant: *Les Prisons* de Marguerite de Navarre aux limites de la poésie exégétique," *French Forum* 16 (1991): 261–284. See also Miernowski's *Le dieu néant: théologies négatives à l'aube des temps modernes* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

86 Navarre, *The Prisons*, 63, ll. 525–531. "Car en disant: 'Je suys qui suys', tel maistre/M'aprint alors le quel estoit mon estre:/S'il est qui est, hors de luy je ne puy/Dire de moy, sinon que je ne suys;/Si rien ne suys, las! Où est ma fiance/Vertu, bonté et droicte conscience? Or suys je riens, s'il est Celluy qui est!" Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 153, ll. 525–531.

prevents the soul from reflecting God's identity and gaze back to Him. To mirror divine nature, it must thus first fully manifest the emptiness of its own sin. Only then can it attain self-knowledge, because that is the path to imitating Christ's sacrifice, and Christ represents the totality of all knowledge in this humanist Evangelical perspective:

Now when that word had sunk into my heart
 The true Messiah was revealed to me,
 And other things besides I clearly saw,
 My sins and all my life and conduct too.
 But knowledge of our vices does not mean
 That we repent us truly of our deeds,
 For sin and vice are of such ugliness
 That, clearly seen, they fill us with disgust.
 The man who sees it face to face, unmasked,
 Will quickly banish sin from heart and mind,
 For no one will accept his company,
 Such is the foulness and the stench of vice;
 Indeed there is no thief or murderer
 Who would continue in his evil trade
 If sin did not conceal its ugliness
 Beneath a cloak of pleasure and success.⁸⁷

Reading the words "Je suis qui les pechez pardonne," the soul experiences regret rather than shame for its previous deceits, resting in forgetfulness:

Love makes the heart forget how weak it is
 And takes it at one bound from sin to grace;
 And as it grows in knowledge of that grace
 It sees more clearly its great load of sin;
 For one who has not seen translucent light

87 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 64, ll. 550–564. "Quand ce mot là dans mon cueur fut venu,/Le Messias au vray y fut congneu;/Et d'autre part, mon peché clèrement,/Toute ma vie et mon gouvernement./Mais pour avoir des vices congnoissance/Cela n'est pas vraye resipicence:/Car le peché et le vice est si laid,/Que en le voyant tel qu'il est, il desplaist;/Qui peché void, sans masque ou faulx visaige,/Le chassera bien tost de son courage,/Car sa puante et orde vilennie/Le fait bannir de toute compaignye,/Tant qu'il n'y a ny larron ny meurtrier/Qui n'en voulust renoncer le mestier/Si de plaisir ou prouffit couverture/Peché n'avoit, pour couvrir sa laidure." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 154, ll. 549–564.

Can never judge the dark's intensity,
 But he who sees unclouded radiance
 Can also see the darkness turned to light;
 For light and dark are contraries, and light,
 When it appears, drives out obscurity.
 And sin cannot be seen for what it is
 Unless God makes it known to us in Him;
 Sin is not found in God, but recognized
 In Him; without His light we are misled
 And cannot see it in our human flesh
 In its true shape; but when a man is drawn
 By faith within the heart of that great light,
 Then sin, its source and substance, are made plain;
 And once revealed in its true form sin dies
 In that same light which made it visible.
 So full of virtue is that word, 'I am,'
 So powerful, so bold and strong to save,
 That every hostile heart is terror-struck'
 But all tormented souls that trust in it
 Find rest. . . .⁸⁸

As in the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, revelation projects the soul's faults back upon itself. Scripture leads souls to "live and die" and to "hurt and to heal" by moving them to abandon their worldly attachments.

For Marguerite, the divine Word mirrors man's fallen state. Secrecy protects the Word in its immanence and illuminates the depths of men's hearts (*fondz des cueurs par façon bien nouvelle*) from within. In this humanist Evangelical thought, Old Testament law represents a mirror of sin because it prohibits

88 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 65, ll. 587–607. "Amour luy fait oublier sa deffaulte,/Et de peché fait que à la grace il saulte;/Et plus de grace il se trouve assureé,/Plus son peché il voit desmesuré./Car qui n'a veu lumiere lumineuse/Ne peult juger tenebre tenebreuse;/Mais qui peult veoir lumiere sans nuée,/L'obscurité en clarté voyt muée/Car la clarté à tenebre est contraire;/L'une venant, l'autre convient retraire./Peché au vray ne peult peché paroistre/Si Dieu en soy ne le nous fait congnoistre;/Peché en Dieu n'est pas, mais il s'y voit,/Car hors de Dieu, où il est nous deçoit,/Tant que nul oeil ne le peult veoir en chair/Tel comme il est; mais qui peult aprocher/Par vive foy dedans ceste lumiere,/Il void peché, sa source et sa matiere./Mais quand tout tel comme il est il appert,/Ceste clarté qui le monstre le pert;/Ce mot 'Je suys' est de telle efficace,/Vertu, povoir, et puissance, et audace,/Que aux ennemys donne espovantement,/Et aux amys, au milieu du tourment,/Donne repoz. . . ." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 155, ll. 583–697.

corrupt behavior. This association between secrecy, vice, and prohibition has a vital role in the *Heptameron*. The law of Charity represents a truer form of mirroring. Whereas Old Testament law prohibits but ultimately encourages sin (because it can be hidden from the law), the law of Christian charity represents, for humanist spiritual thinkers, a true mirror that reflects divine laws engraved in the hearts of the faithful. Christian law does not prohibit and thereby proliferate sin; rather, in Marguerite's view, it "chases away" dissimulated thoughts, hypocrisy, and false belief.⁸⁹ The clarity of the divine word declares the secret of Christian wisdom:

Thus was my mind illuminated by that light,
And by that voice its secrets were revealed,
Then warmth of fire diffused itself in me
And showed me my small self, my nothingness,
Till, brought at last to nothing by that power,
I knew the One who truly is the All
And learnt how all my studies came to this:
I more than ever had become their slave.
Now too I saw that fire divine take hold
And lay my prison open to the skies,
Consuming roof and laurel crown, that mark
Of utmost honour, sought by all great hearts.⁹⁰

Through a meditative exegesis on John 1:4, the speaker recounts his insight into how "Cil qui est" has been secretly present throughout history, both in the books of history and nature. He revealed Himself in diverse ways but remains eternally identical to himself, whereas history and nature are "covers" concealing His identity and serve as instruments to raise the soul towards God. The individual's experience of secrecy takes on an exemplary, apologetic

89 Ibid., 65–66, ll. 615–635. On Christ as mirror in *The Prisons*, see Gwenette Orr Robertson, "Christ, the Double Mirror: Evangelism and Negative Theology in the Poem *Les Prisons* by Marguerite of Navarre," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 4, 1 (2002): 35–47.

90 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 67, ll. 656–666. "Ceste clarté me vint lors esclairer,/Et ceste voix les secretz declairer,/Et la chaleur du feu me penetra/Tant que petit et plus rien me monstra./Et quand en riens par luy fuz parvenu,/Celluy qui est le vray Tout fut congneu,/Et me monstra que toute mon estude/Plus que jamais c'estoit ma servitude./Ce feu divin, en ma prison ouvrant,/Brulla le hault, et en la descouvrant/Mist le chapeau de laurier tout en cendre,/Remply d'honneur, où tout grant cuer doit tendre." Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 158, ll. 655–665.

importance: it blinds the “carnal eye,” which sees only the exterior world and cannot pierce the shell of appearances to reach their hidden core.⁹¹

The words “I am” disclose “true knowledge” and “intelligence” that lie hidden in God’s “oeuvre,” which he created in “reason,” “measure,” and “weight,” that is, in ways knowable to human science, which Marguerite describes here in the Augustinian terms that I discussed in Chapter 2.⁹² The speaker’s pillars of secular books thenceforth crumble, as the secrets of Christian knowledge and charity that were cloaked “under the cover” of profane learning and the guise of “fiction” become disclosed, annihilating all other forms of knowing and love.⁹³

Secrets, Feminine Mysticism, and Poetics

Marguerite represents Christian charity as a form of love that transcends courtly love, by invoking Marguerite Porete’s thirteenth-century poem titled the *Mirror of Simple Souls*, which was the first treatise on mystical theology written in French and for which Porete was both condemned and burned at the stake as a heretic in 1310.⁹⁴ Whereas *The Prisons*’ speaker believed that he could maintain noble love through secrecy, he now realizes that Christian charity surpasses courtly love. The poem’s speaker asserts that, among all the books he discovered, Porete’s surpasses all others for its description of charitable love.

The Prisons’ speaker admires Porete’s work for its “argument” on divine love, and he integrates Porete’s description of God as a “Gentil Loin-Près” (Gracious Far-Near) into his own poetic discourse. He does so as a way of describing

91 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 69, ll. 733–752.

92 Ibid., 70, ll. 776–780. See also ll. 822–824.

93 Ibid., ll. 850–862; 920. On the notion that literary fiction can express the secrets of Christian wisdom from antiquity to Boccaccio’s *Genealogia deorum*, see D.P. Walker, “The *Prisca Theologia* in France,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVII, 3–4 (1954): 204–255; Peter Dronke, *Fabula: Explorations Into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism* (Leiden, Köln: Brill, 1974); Peter Von Moos’s essay “Literary Aesthetics in the Latin Middle Ages,” in *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 100–1540*, ed. Constant J. Mews, Cary J. Nederman, and Roney M. Thomson (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 89–98.

94 On Marguerite de Navarre and Porete, see Suzanne Kocher, “Marguerite de Navarre’s Portrait of Marguerite Porete: A Renaissance Queen Constructs a Medieval Woman Mystic,” *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 26, Fall (1998): 17–23; Catherine Müller, “‘La lettre et la figure’: lecture allégorique du *Mirouer* de Marguerite Porete dans *Les Prisons* de Marguerite de Navarre,” *Versants: revue suisse des littératures romanes* 38 (2000): 153–167.

God's simultaneous transcendent and immanent status and the conditions under which the soul can accede to His secret essence. The speaker admires Porete for

How well she knew, touched by the Spirit's breath
 The friend, true friend, whom she called Graciousness,
 Her own Far-Near—the best of names for Him
 Whom more than any other we must love.⁹⁵

Divine love renders the soul noble, uncovering itself in the hearts of the humble, but it remains transcendent and separate from worldly creation, even as it bestows grace “where there wasn’t any.” Porete adapted the “Gentil Loing-Près” from conventions of medieval courtly literature to describe how divine, noble love can be both present and absent, transcendent and immanent, with respect to creation.⁹⁶

Porete’s *The Mirror of Simple Souls* articulates the relationship between God’s presence in the world and the detached soul as a tension between “nothing” and “everything.” A detached soul wills “everything” and “nothing” and knows everything and knows nothing, because it “is no longer her will which wills, but now the will of God wills in her.”⁹⁷ Because God gives his love “to no one except to Himself,” the soul itself has nothing even as it has everything, because it is God who loves himself in and through the soul:

95 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 84–85, ll. 1327–1330. “Bien congnoissoit, par cest Esprit subtil,/Le vray Amy qu’elle nommoit Gentil/Et son Loing Près. O que c’est bien nommé/Celluy qui doit par sus tous estre aymé!” Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 180, ll. 1327–1330.

96 Porete owes her interpretation of God as “near” and “far” in part to Meister Eckhart, whose mystical theology she adapts and which the Church condemned as heretical. Citing Saint Augustine’s assertion in the *Confessions* that divine love lies secretly present within the soul’s depths (God is “more intimately present to me than my innermost being, and higher than the highest peak of my spirit . . .”), Meister Eckhart asserts that God’s proximity to the soul leaves no distinction between them. “The very knowledge where God knows Himself inwardly . . .” Eckhart writes, “. . . is the knowledge of all spirits who are detached and no others. The soul receives its essence from God without intermediary. That is why God is closer to the soul than it is to itself. That is why God is the soul’s abyss with all its deity.” For Eckhart, the person who detaches him or herself from all things attains God’s essence. Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense*, ed. Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and McGinn Bernard (New York; Toronto: Paulist Press, 1981), 285.

97 Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. Ellen L. Babinsky (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 84–85. Cf. also 92.

... this Soul possesses God by divine grace, and whoever possesses God, possesses all things. And so [the book] says she possesses nothing, for all that this Soul possesses from God within her by the gift of divine grace, seems to be nothing to her. And thus it is [nothing] compared to what she loves, which is in Him, which He will not give to anyone except Himself. And according to this intellect this Soul possesses all and so possesses nothing, she knows all and so knows nothing.⁹⁸

For Porete, the soul that embraces the depths of its inner nothingness becomes deified and no longer needs devotional intermediaries:

... the meaning of what is said makes me nothing, and the nothingness of this alone has placed me in an abyss below less than nothingness without measure. And the understanding of my nothingness ... has given me the All, and the nothingness of this All ... has taken from me prayer, and I pray nothing ... you who have lost all your practices, and through this loss have the practice of doing nothing, truly you are very precious. ...⁹⁹

Marguerite de Navarre adapts the mystical and courtly theme of noble love that Porete developed, in part because it nourished her critique of institutional Church practices but also because its alliance with poetry allowed her to articulate spiritual ideals outside academic and professional theological discourse on the relation between God and creation. For Marguerite de Navarre, the themes of God as near and far and as everything and nothing serve to describe God's charitable goodness and the nobility it imparts to the human soul:

But still the Gracious One pours forth His grace
Upon the ignoble soul, without regrets,
For of His own nobility no jot
Is lost in giving freely where none was;
The soul, endowed with His own graciousness,
No longer base, is now ennobled too ...

98 Ibid., 96. (Chapter 14).

99 Ibid., 129 (Chapter 51). See also page 125, where Love says "the smallest part of His goodness which one could compare in a manner of speaking still would be nothing compared to the grandeur of the smallest part of His goodness. And it would be less than a spark, compared to the whole of Him"—a metaphor that also appears in Marguerite's *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*.

For of His goodness He makes like Himself
 The unworthy vessel where through grace He dwells.¹⁰⁰

God is “far” in his greatness (*hautesse*) and from the “flesh of our humanity”; in his “power,” he is far but close to both the “sky” and the “earth,” which Christ’s sacrifice united. Through a mystical experience brought by the Holy Spirit, the *Prisons*’ speaker discovers the secret of God’s identity, based on the model of Exodus 3:14, and recognizes that all his previous readings were but shadows of Holy Scripture:

... Him alone, the One who Is, I see
 In every single word that meets my eye.
 Indeed He can be found in every book
 If our dull eyes are not deceived by words . . .
 He can be seen and known without disguise,
 Essayed, then grasped and held, made part of us.¹⁰¹

This disclosure sets the speaker free from his prisons and the solitude of his self-love. The speaker’s entrapment—his cover, hiddenness, and servitude—within the world of corporeality becomes “revealed, untrammelled, clear,” and this revelation frees him from his “multitudinous desires” for honors, profits, and pleasures:

But that same Spirit, striking swift and sure
 Cuts through the bonds that hold the heart in thrall,
 And when presumption and a man’s desire
 To be a thing of worth have lost the fight
 Against the Spirit who so clearly shows
 How small a thing man is and nothing worth,
 And when he can accept that nothingness,

100 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 85–87, ll. 1343–1348; 1403–1404. “Mais ce Gentil sa gentillesse espond/Sur la vilaine, et point ne s’en repent,/Car de noblesse il ne pert ung seul point/En la donnant où n’y en avoit point,/Mais anoblit par gentillesse l’ame. . . /Car tel qu’il est, sa bonté sans merite/Rend le vaisseau où par grace il habite.” Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 180, ll. 1343–1347; 1403–1404.

101 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 87, ll. 1431–1439. “Ceste clarté me fut tant secourable/Que le seul Ung, Celluy qui est, me monstre/En chasque lettre où mon oeil se rencontre./Et nonobstant que en tous livres il soit/Si l’oeil de chair la lettre ne deçoit, / . . . Tresclairement se peult veoir et aprendre,/Gouster, sçavoir, incorporer et prendre.” Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 183, ll. 1430–1434; 1437–1438.

And prize and love it more than men's esteem,
 Then books are opened wide, their sense laid bare,
 And what was labour once becomes delight.
 . . . [How] by that fire I found myself set free;
 My ignorance and pride were stripped from me,
 My prison changed, became my liberty
 Instead of labour I was granted rest;
 Then all those bonds that had impeded me
 And held me back were loosed, and I was free,
 But, more than that, they served me as a cord
 To draw me onward where compassion lies.¹⁰²

The Holy Spirit “annihilates” the speaker, destroying his false beliefs and mortifying him, turning him into “nothing,” but a nothing that is free from fears. This represents a further poetic meditation on 1 John 4, according to which divine love banishes all fear, turning imprisonment into liberty, darkness into light, secrecy into openness.

102 Marguerite de Navarre, *The Prisons*, 85–87; 91–92, ll. 1553–1572; 1580–1590. “Mais cest Esprit, qui au cueur frappe droit/Rompt le lyen qui le tient en estroict,/Et quand cuyder d'estre chose qui vaille/Et le desir ont perdu la bataille/Contre l'Esprit, lequel monstre combien/Peu de chose est ung homme, et moins que rien,/Et que ce Rien vient à estre agreable/Plus que l'honneur plaisant et profitable,/Les livres sont ouvertz, decloz, patens,/Et les labeurs tournez en pasetemps. . . . [Par] cet Esprit dont la clarté alume/Toute tenebre et toute prison rompt,/Poulsé d'amour qui le rend fort et prompt./Or fuz je donc par ce feu mys au large,/Qui d'ignorance et cuyder me descharge,/Et ma prison en liberté muée,/Voire en repoz ma payne commuée./Tous mes lyens, par qui fuz empesché/D'aller avant, j'en fuz bien detaché,/Et qui plus est, me servirent de corde/Pour me tirer à la misericorde.” Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, 187, ll. 1563–1572; 188, 1580–1590.

Evangelical Secrecy and Courtly News: The *Heptameron* (1559)

General Introduction

Marguerite de Navarre's collection of seventy-two short stories, titled the *Heptameron* (1559), makes secrecy a central narrative and thematic concern. Here I argue that secrecy functions in several of her stories in relation to the ideas of openness and of news (*nouvelle*). Secrecy occupies a central place in the *Heptameron* in part because its stories parody medieval literary conventions relating to the phenomenon of love service, for which secrecy is a necessary means of protecting individual and collective honor. The stories dealing with love service reflect on the way prohibitions against speech lead protagonists first to suppress their fantasies, then to invent secret stratagems to achieve their desired ends.

The contrast between Marguerite's stories and her devotional poems has led scholars to search for ways to articulate the connections between them. The *Heptameron*'s relationship to Marguerite's devotional works and to the history of religion in France during the late medieval period into the first half of the sixteenth century has been notably discussed by Robert Cottrell, Gérard Defaux, Edwin Duval, Jan Miernowski,¹ and most recently by Gary Ferguson and Mary Mckinley, who study the *Heptameron* from the point of view of sixteenth-century French religious and literary history and explore the multiple ways in which spiritual concerns play into Marguerite's stories.²

-
- 1 See Robert Cottrell, "Inmost Cravings: The Logic of Desire in The *Heptameron*," in *Critical Tales: New Studies of The Heptameron and Early Modern Culture*, ed. John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 3–24; Gérard Defaux, "De la bonne nouvelle aux nouvelles: remarques sur la structure de l'*Heptaméron*," *French Forum* 27, no. 1 (2002): 23–43; Edwin Duval, "Et puis, quelles nouvelles?: The project of Marguerite's Unfinished Decameron," also in *Critical Tales: New Studies of The Heptameron And Early Modern Culture*, 112–118; Jan Miernowski, *Signes dissimilaires: la quête des noms divins dans la poésie française de la renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1997), especially 33–99, and his article titled "L'intentionnalité dans l'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance*, 63 (2001), 201–225.
 - 2 Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, "The *Heptaméron*: Word, Spirit, World," in *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, 323–371.

Numerous scholars have discussed the way that Marguerite conceived of secrecy in both secular and spiritual terms. Richard Regosin's work on secrecy in the *Heptameron* adopts a Foucauldian view of the history of sexuality, arguing that Marguerite's stories illustrate the paradoxical status of repressed erotic drives that continue to disclose themselves obliquely. He explores Foucault's view that prohibitions on sexual discourse not only create the need for fables of secrecy but also depend on them for their authority. In work on secrecy and religion, Mary McKinley studies the *Heptameron* in terms of changing perspectives on sacramental confession, showing that both Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite challenge the absolutionist understanding of confession that dominated late-medieval Church doctrine, according to which the power of absolution belongs to the sacrament and to the institution of priesthood. The *Heptameron's* forty-first story, in her view, articulates a contritionist perspective on the sacrament of penance, according to which the remission of guilt depends entirely on interior contrition, not on external institutions. Secrecy generates narratives, she argues, in which a feminine subjectivity becomes articulated in resistance to "male-dominated" narratives associated with institutional control over women through confessional practice.³

Secrecy becomes important in the *Heptameron* in ways that Frank Kermode's ideas on secrets and narrative also help to clarify. Kermode's work argues that secrecy functions in narrative through motive and emplotment; in his view, secrets invite readers to reevaluate how motive (what he calls *dianoia*, *ethos*) relates to action and event. He writes that secrets "are at odds with sequence, which is considered an aspect of propriety; and a passion for sequence may result in the suppression of the secret."⁴ Secrets in this view stand at odds with narrative arrangement and propriety, and, we may further speculate,

3 Richard Regosin, "Leaky Vessels: Secrets of Narrative in the *Heptaméron* and the Chatelaine's Lament," *Mediaevalia: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Studies Worldwide* 22 (1999): 181–200. Mary B. McKinley, "Telling Secrets: Sacramental Confession and Narrative Authority in the *L'Heptaméron*," in *Critical Tales: New Studies of the Heptaméron and Early Modern Culture*, 146–171.

4 Frank Kermode, "Secrets and Narrative Sequence," in *Essays on Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 85. See Kermode's reference to Juri M. Lotman's "The Origin of the Plot in the Light of Typology," *Poetics Today* 1, nos. 1–2 (1979): 161–184, esp. 163. As Kermode explains, "Lotman speaks of two primeval kinds of plot. The first is 'mythic' and has no 'excesses or anomalies'; it is timeless and motionless. The second is the linear tale about incidents, news, 'excesses.' The two exist in dialectical interaction, and the result is a 'fusion of scandal and miracle.' A secret motivation arising from the 'eschatological' plot intrudes into the linear plot; 'mythologism penetrates into the sphere of excess.'" Kermode notes how "the assurance of a timeless and motionless transcendent world reduces to insignificance the

they stand opposed to both aesthetic propriety and decorum. That is, we can interpret Kermode's idea of propriety to refer not just to the arrangement of sequences but also to propriety in the sense of civil decorum. Propriety can refer to aesthetic norms but also to the conventions of public life with which secrets stand at odds.

My argument here coincides with the critical approaches I have been discussing because it examines how the *Heptameron* situates Christian humanist spirituality with respect to secular society, in part through the storyteller named Oisille. Nonetheless, my approach differs by dealing with secrecy in relation to both the idea and the genre of the *nouvelle*, which occupies a central place throughout the collection's stories. The *Heptameron's nouvelles* dramatize the tension between secrecy and news by staging conflicts between private fantasy and public decorum. Most importantly, throughout the *Heptameron's* stories, socially prohibited fantasies lead to secret stratagems that, in the narratives I discuss here, become uncovered through the effects of fortune, news, rumor, and noise.⁵ Secrets stand closely connected with prudence in avoiding the pitfalls of public life, and their disclosure becomes the basis on which Marguerite builds the central events of her stories.

The fantasies that motivate the protagonists in the examples I discuss below generally fall into three categories of human motivation: honor, profit, or pleasure. In previous chapters, I considered how humanist Evangelical thinkers opposed spiritual secrecy to these kinds of character motivation.⁶ In contrast, by exploring the world of profane desires, the *Heptameron* represents but also turns away from the kind of inward and spiritual secrecy discussed in earlier chapters. The narrative point of view that the collection casts on these desires remains informed by the Evangelical and humanist concerns I have been

faits divers which seem to constitute the narrative of ordinary life." Kermode, "Secrets and Narrative Sequence," 85.

5 On the French *nouvelle's* emergence as a genre from the conventions of Occitan, see Suzanne Méjean-Thiolier and Marie-Françoise Notz-Grob, eds., *Nouvelles courtoises: occitanes et françaises* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1997), including the bibliography. Thiolier and Notz-Grob trace the *nouvelle's* development out of medieval lyrical conventions into a distinct genre during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They show that the term *nouvelle* in medieval Occitan prose refers to *récit*, *conte*, *histoire*, that is, to stories that have interest and are rich in adventures. They further show that the term *novella* refers to *bruit*, *rumeur*, *nouvelle*.

6 On avarice, lust, and pride in the *Heptameron*, cf. Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, "The *Heptaméron*," 336–337. On pleasure, profit, and honor, see my essay "Humanist Polemics, Christian Morals: A Hypothesis on Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* and the Problem of Self-Love," *Modern Language Notes*, 120, No. 1 supplement (2005): 81–95.

discussing in the preceding chapters.⁷ As we have seen, Augustine opposes sacred secrecy, which refers to the human soul's originary and divine dignity, to profane secrecy as a problem of dissimulation relating to the desires for honor, profit, and pleasure in secular spheres of human endeavor. The latter represents the world of the *Heptameron's* stories.

Speaking the Truth

The *nouvelle* tradition integrates elements from other medieval genres—from the medieval *farces*, *fabliaux*, from the *jongleurs*, and, I argue, from secrecy as it functions in the *roman allégorique*.⁸ For instance, in the *nouvelle* tradition, narrators often claim to speak the truth (*dire la vérité*).⁹ The narrators' claims to speak the truth derive in part from conventions used by medieval *jongleurs* and, more importantly here, from *romans allégoriques*, for which “speaking the truth” means delivering a moral truth on the basis of profane fables and stories. Speaking the truth in this context implies that there is a hidden or secret meaning behind the surface level of the narrative, which will be disclosed to the reader or listener.¹⁰

7 Cf. Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, “The *Heptaméron*,” 331–340.

8 On the *Heptameron's* relation to the *exemplum*, see Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, “The *Heptaméron*,” 360–364 and notes.

9 On this truth convention in the tradition of the *nouvelle*, see Emily Thompson, “‘Une merveilleuse espece d’animal’: Fable and Verisimilitude in Bonaventure des Périers’s *Nouvelles recreation et joyeux devis*,” in *Narrative Worlds: Essays on the Nouvelles in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century France*, ed. Gary Ferguson and David LaGuardia (Tempe, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 17–33. Cited in Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, “The *Heptaméron*,” 327, n. 14.

10 On the allegorical expression *veritatem dicere*, see Paul Zumthor, *Langue, texte, énigme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 237–49. The author studies medieval prologues presented in Ulrich Mölk, *Französische Literaturästhetik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts; Prologe, Exkurse, Epiloge* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1969). See also H.R. Jauss, “La transformation de la forme allégorique entre 1180 et 1240: d’Alain de Lille à Guillaume de Lorris,” in *L’Humanisme médiéval dans les littératures romanes du XII^e Au XIV^e siècle*, ed. A. Fourrier, 108–146. (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964). The trope’s place in the allegorical tradition functions dialogically in relation to its use by *jongleurs*—cf. Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 286. For a general and brief discussion of truth conventions in the Middle Ages, through Machaut’s *Voir Dit*, see Jeanette M.A. Beer, *Narrative Conventions of Truth in the Middle Ages* (Geneva: Droz, 1981). For a general discussion on *parole* and *vérité*, see also Daniel Poirion, “Qu’est-ce que la littérature? France 1100–1600,” in *What Is*

I would like to lay the ground for my textual readings in the next sections by considering some medieval backgrounds for the *Heptameron's* narrative strategies. In the Middle Ages, the word *nouvelle* traditionally refers to the idea of *récit*, *conte*, *histoire*, and to the ideas of rumor and novelty.¹¹ All these words relate closely to the idea, common throughout the *Heptameron*, of speaking the truth (*dire vérité*), which literally means giving evidence on oath (*témoignage sur la foi du serment*). But the idea of speaking the truth also has broader implications relating to the allegorical tradition. Hans Robert Jauss explains how the term *dit* was transformed in the twelfth century, referring to a new *modus dicendi* based on the distinction of *parole coverte* and *parole ouverte*. He argues that this enabled twelfth-century authors to legitimate profane literature and at the same time to criticize courtly writing for its perceived lack of spiritual significance. In this tradition, the *dit* distinguishes itself from the *conte*, which comes to be conceived as purely literary. According to Jauss, twelfth-century authors criticized the *fableors* for their view of literature as being merely “delightful and pleasant fables” (*fables delitouses et plaisables*). The *Roman de la rose* (ca. 1230–1270–80) gave an important role to poetic fiction in articulating truth by placing the literal meaning in relation to allegorical mystery. Whereas for religious poets, the literal meaning refers to Biblical history, in the *Roman de la rose*, which Marguerite knew and Clément Marot (1496–1544) had partly translated, the story is fictitious (a dream) but contains

Literature? France 1100–1600, ed. François Cornilliat, Ullrich Langer, and Douglas Kelly (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum, Publishers, 1993), 1–29. On truth in the *Heptameron*, see Marcel Tetel, “L’*Heptaméron*: première nouvelle et fonction des devisants,” in *La nouvelle française à la Renaissance*, ed. Lionello Sozzi and V.L. Saulnier (Geneva: Slatkine, 1981), 449–458.

- 11 See Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, “Le clerc et l’écriture,” in *Comme mon coeur désire: Guillaume de Machaut*, ed. Denis Hüe (Orléans: Paradigme, 2001), 155, n. 55 and Jauss, 119. See also Paul Zumthor, *Langue, Texte, Énigme*, especially 243–247, where he discusses *roman et histoire*, showing that medieval prologues present their historical matter with the verb *dire*. He shows that, in the genre of the *roman* as contrasted with historiographical genres and epic, “‘Je dis vrai’ signifie ici ‘je livre un sens’; ce qui ne peut s’entendre que d’un sens second, puisque le premier, *sensus litteralis*, provient de la simple constatation des événements. La *littera* permet au lecteur de découvrir quelque partie inconnue du passé, de la vie, ou du sentiment. . . . La découverte d’un sens second exige une interprétation, et le narrateur intégrera à son texte, de quelque manière, des indices qui en suggèrent les modalités” (246–47). The *Heptameron* puts the words *dire* and *conter* into a different kind of relation, which I discuss below.

truth. This legitimates poetic creation and fuses literal and mystical levels of meaning.¹²

Cerquiglini-Toulet has shown that the word *dire* replaced *conter* as a mode of literary exposition in the later Middle Ages. *Estoire* and *dit* (or *dire*), she argues, became opposed to *fable* and *conte* (or *conter*). The term *historia* in Biblical language, she explains, refers to the *sensus literalis*, while the Old French *estoire* refers to the level of truth that these authors claim for their narrations over and against imagination and fable. The word *dit* in this perspective signals a claim on truth and distinguishes itself from *conte* as a purely literary construction. As Jauss notes, the word *dit*, which later became related to diverse genres, was “strictement limité dans son emploi: par opposition à la littérature profane nourrie de fictions.” *Dire* in this view replaces *raconter* and became associated with the well-known image of the bark and the medulla.¹³

The *Heptameron's* first prologue brings to the foreground the questions raised by these scholars about the legitimacy of narrative. Through a series of reflections on fiction, time, and pathology, the prologue depicts the fictive narrators sheltering themselves in an abbey and debating the best ways to use their time while waiting for the shelter's abbot to finish building a bridge over a flooded river so that they can cross it and return home. In debating how to use their time, the narrators develop what Marc Fumaroli has, in a different sphere of critical discussion, characterized as an “anthropological” view of literary fiction and its relation to pathology.¹⁴ The fictive narrators (or *devisants*)

12 See H.R. Jauss, “La Transformation de la forme allégorique,” 125. Carol Thyssell has argued that the *Heptameron's* claim to represent the truth marks a turn to “the tradition of secular allegorical rhetoric as articulated by Boccaccio but shared by many Renaissance critics” and that this gesture makes an indirect claim for “her work's status as theology.” Boccaccio, she recalls, had affirmed that although poetry and theology are opposed to the extent that the latter “presupposes nothing unless it be true, while poetry puts forth certain things as true that are surely false,” fiction can nonetheless be used for the instruction of Christian truths because “theology and poetry can be considered as almost one and the same thing when their subject is the same.” Carol Thyssell, *The Pleasure of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian*, 14–15.

13 H.R. Jauss, “La Transformation de la forme allégorique,” 125.

14 Marc Fumaroli retraces seventeenth-century debates about the relations between fictional illusion, truth, and probability to Jacques Amyot's 1547 preface and translation of the *Histoire éthiopique d'Héliodore* and to the polemic against chivalric novels. Although Fumaroli does not deal with the *Heptameron*, we can see how Amyot's work resembles Marguerite's discussion of storytelling as exercise for the spirit. For Amyot, we need distraction from “sad thoughts” and recreations that do not offend the truth and that allow the mind to return to its duties with greater fervor. Amyot develops an “anthropology,” as Fumaroli writes, of pathological melancholy relating to the lack of proper recreation and

debate about ways to pass the time. They argue over the choice of a pastime that is “amusing and virtuous” (*plaisante et vertueuse*) during their “long stay” (*longue demeure*). They need this pastime, they explain, lest they become sick with boredom (*ennui*), which they call a *fascheuse maladie*.¹⁵ Oisille professes that meditating on Scripture alone can remedy *ennui*:

My children . . . when you ask me to show you a pastime that is capable of delivering you from your boredom and your sorrow, you are asking me to do something that I find very difficult. All my life I have searched for a remedy, and I have found only one—the reading of holy Scripture, in which one may find true and perfect spiritual joy, from which proceed health and bodily repose. And if you ask what the prescription is that keeps me happy and healthy in my old age, I will tell you. As soon as I rise in the morning I take the Scriptures and read them. I see and contemplate the goodness of God, who for our sakes has sent His son to earth to declare the holy word and the good news by which He grants remission of all our sins, and payment of all our debts, through His gift to us of His love, His passion and His merits. And my contemplations give me such joy, that I take my psalter, and with the utmost humility, sing the beautiful psalms and hymns that the Holy Spirit has composed in the heart of David and the other authors. The contentment this affords me fills me with such well-being that whatever the evils of the day, they are to me so many blessings, for in my I heart I have by faith Him who has borne these evils for me.¹⁶

exercise through reading. Fictions can blind the spirit or, under the proper conditions, exercise and nourish it. To do so, however, fiction must, in Amyot's view, obey the laws of verisimilitude or probability and refine the art of suspense in such a way that it does not violate those laws. In this discussion, the ideas of event, surprise, and fables as veils for the secrecy of Christian wisdom occupy a central place. See Marc Fumaroli, “Jacques Amyot and the Clerical Polemic against the Chivalric Novel,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1985): 22–40. Cited in Isabelle Diu, *Mémoire des chevaliers: édition, diffusion et réception des romans de chevalerie du XVII^e au XX^e siècle* (Paris: Ecole des Chartres, 2007), 23.

15 Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. Michel François (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1996), 6–7.

16 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, ed. and trans. P.A. Chilton (London: Penguin Classics, 1984), 66–67. “Mes enfans, vous me demandez une chose que je trouve fort difficile, de vous enseigner ung passetemps qui vous puisse delivrer de vos ennuyctz; car, aiant chergé le remede toute ma vye, n'en ay jamais trouvé que ung, qui est la lecture des saintes lettres en laquelle se trouve la vraie et parfaite joie de l'esprit, dont procede le repos et la santé du corps. Et, si vous me demandez quelle recepte me tient si joyeuse et si saine sur

In Oisille's view, meditating on Scripture's allegorical meaning provides health to the body and the soul. She structures time according to the traditional division of spiritual exercises: reading (*lectio*), meditation (*meditatio, contemplatio*), and prayer (*oratio*). She gives voice to the Stoic and Christian views that inner reflection and devotion allow the soul to prepare for the unexpected events to which the figure of Fortune gives rise. Oisille views these events not as evils but rather as concerns that lie beyond human control and for which one must prepare oneself.¹⁷

Oisille argues that Scriptural secrecy and news—the Gospel being the disclosure of a messianic secret, or a *bonne nouvelle*—must serve as the basis for the spiritual exercises that, in her view, can help pass the time without boredom (*ennui*). Oisille meditates on her days (*journées*) as a form of penance, as she explains by asserting that

ma vieillesse, c'est que, incontinent que je suys levée, je prends la Sainte Escripture et la lys, et, en voiant et contemplant la bonté de Dieu, qui pour nous a envoyé son filz en terre anoncer ceste sainte parolle et bonne nouvelle, par laquelle il permect remission de tous pechez, satisfaction de toutes debtes par le don qu'il nous faict de son amour, passion et merites, ceste consideration me donne tant de joye que je prends mon psaultier et, le plus humblement qu'il m'est possible, chante de cueur et prononce de bouche les beaulx psealmes et canticques que le saint Esperit a composé au cueur de David et des autres auteurs. Et ce contentement là que je en ay me faict tant de bien que tous les maulx qui le jour me peuvent advenir me semblent estre benedictions, veu que j'ay en mon cueur par foy Celluy qui les a portez pour moy." Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, 7.

- 17 In his foundational study on the history of spiritual exercises in classical and Christian antiquity, Pierre Hadot writes, "The exercise of meditation allows us to be ready at the moment when an unexpected—and perhaps dramatic—circumstance occurs. . . . First thing in the morning, we should go over in advance what we have to do during the course of the day, and decide on the principles which will guide and inspire our actions. In the evening, we should examine ourselves again, so as to be aware of the faults we have committed or the progress we have made. . . . The goal is to arrange it [inner discourse] around a simple, universal principle: the distinction between what does and does not depend on us, or between freedom and nature. Whoever wishes to make progress strives, by means of dialogue with himself or with others, as well as by writing, to 'carry on his reflections in due order' and finally to arrive at a complete transformation of his representation of the world, his inner climate, and his outer behavior. These methods testify to a deep knowledge of the therapeutic powers of the world. The exercise of meditation and memorization requires nourishment. . . . reading, listening, research, and investigation. It is a relatively simple matter to provide food for meditation. . . ." Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 85–86.

Likewise, before supper, I withdraw to nourish my soul with readings and meditations. In the evening I ponder in my mind everything I have done during the day, so that I may ask God forgiveness of my sins, and give thanks to Him for His mercies. And so I lay myself to rest in his love, fear and peace, assured against all evils. And this, my children, is the pastime that long ago I adopted. All other ways have I tried, but none has given me spiritual contentment. I believe that if, each morning, you give one hour to reading, and then, during mass, say your prayers devoutly, you will find even in this wilderness all the beauty a city could afford. For, a person who knows God will find all things beautiful in Him, and without Him all things will seem ugly. So I say to you, if you would live in happiness, heed my advice.¹⁸

Oisille here develops an Augustinian opposition between monastic solitude and urban life. Solitude represents the human soul's potential for inward transformation as opposed to its pursuit of profane values (honors, profits, and pleasures). She asserts that the union of heart and mouth in devotional prayer attains its perfection in contentment, which transforms one's understanding of the world. Her inversion of beauty and ugliness plays on the Christian theme of folly as wisdom and of wisdom as folly.¹⁹ Oisille conceives of meditating on Scriptural secrecy and news as the remedy for illnesses caused by

18 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 66–67. “Pareillement avant souper, je me retire pour donner pâture à mon âme de quelque leçon, et puis au soir fais une récollection de tout de ce que j’ai fait la journée passée, pour demander pardon de mes fautes et le remercier de ses grâces; et en son amour, crainte et paix prends mon repos assuré de tous maux. Parquoi, mes enfants, voilà le passe-temps auquel je me suis arrêtée, longtemps après avoir cherché en tous autres, et non trouvé, contentement de mon esprit. Il me semble que si tous les matins vous voulez donner une heure à la lecture, et puis durant la messe faire vos dévotes oraisons, vous trouverez en ce désert la beauté qui peut être en toutes les villes: car qui connaît Dieu voit toutes choses belles en lui, et sans lui tout laid. Parquoi je vous prie, recevez mon conseil si vous voulez vivre joyeusement.” *L’Heptaméron*, 7–8.

19 The image of the desert is central to Briçonnet’s thought. He draws on the Plotinian and Augustinian tradition of representing the desert as the heart’s solitude in the divine, where all worldly representations have left the heart. Such solitude appears desolate from a worldly point of view but as plenitude from the point of view of faith. Entrance to the desert represents the soul’s accession to divine secrecy. The image of the desert for Marguerite and Briçonnet is closely associated with the distinction between external and internal devotion and the idea that the confession of one’s sins and spiritual indigence represents the only path to salvation. Avowing sin releases the springs of grace, making desertification plenitude and plenitude desertification. Augustine opposes the image of the desert to the world of profane honors, profits, and pleasures in his treatise “On the

anticipating fortune's surprising events. She thus opposes devotional uses of time to its profane uses, and she expounds on the need to prepare for fortune's reversals by detaching oneself from the fleeting and profane values of honor, profit, and pleasure.

Oisille's Evangelical beliefs contrast with the worldly values embodied by the other narrators. Critics have observed that Oisille remains incapable of proposing activities and uses of time other than meditation on Scripture and prayer because she knows no other remedies to boredom (*ennui*).²⁰ Oisille, in this view, is alone and limited in her perspective. We can add that, when the question of time comes before the group's plurality of opinions (*pluralité d'opinions*), although Hircan "confesses" that Oisille's *dict* is *veritable* and although he concedes that each day should begin with the reading of Scripture, he asserts the need for other profane activities as well. In Hircan's view, devotion alone cannot cure the human soul's boredom (*ennui*). He argues that human health depends on distractions and activities for one's soul and body; it depends on pastimes and physical exercise (*passetemps* and *exercice corporel*) as well as devotion.²¹ While Oisille presents union in devotional spirit as the cardinal value in human life, Hircan counterbalances her devotion and gravity by asserting the need for recreation and levity. The other *devisants* also insist on the body and soul as legitimate concerns in their own right. Oisille's Christian humanist perspective thus occupies a central position in Marguerite's *Heptameron*, and her insistence on spirit contrasts with the other narrators' views on the importance of body and soul.

I have argued that the threefold division of spirit, soul, and body that I discussed in previous chapters contributes to structuring the debate in the *Heptameron*'s first prologue about time and its proper uses. Following this debate over uses of time, Parlamente proposes to spend the time imitating Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which she describes both as a pastime and as a game. Parlamente explains,

True Religion," in *Earlier Writings; Selected and Translated with Introductions by John H.S. Burleigh*, trans. John H.S. Burleigh (Philadelphia, Westminster Press 1953), 3-5.

20 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 66-67. On Oisille's Evangelism and its relation to the group of other *devisants*, see Philippe de Lajarte, "Autour d'un paradoxe: les Nouvelles de Marguerite de Navarre et sa correspondance avec Briçonnet," in *Marguerite de Navarre 1492-1992. Actes du colloque international de Pau (1992)*, ed. Nicole Cazauran and James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan: Editions InterUniversitaires, 1995), 593-634.

21 Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, 9.

If I felt myself to be as capable as the ancients, by whom the arts were discovered, then I would invent some pastime myself that would meet the requirements you have laid down for me. However, I know what lies within the scope of my own knowledge and ability—I can hardly even remember the clever things other people have invented, let alone invent new things myself. So I shall be quite content to follow closely in the footsteps of other people who have already provided for your needs. For example, I don't think there's one of us who hasn't read the hundred tales by Boccaccio, which have recently been translated from Italian into French, and which are so highly thought of by the [most Christian] King Francis I, by Monseigneur the Dauphin, Madame the Dauphine and Madame Marguerite.²²

The prologue announces that the *Heptameron's nouvelles* will function as literary imitations, pastimes, and games, and Parlamente asserts that their innovative quality shall lie less in their inventiveness than in their truthfulness. Whereas Oisille proposes using time in spiritual devotion to Scripture as a form of prudence against the pitfalls of worldly life and time, Parlamente thus proposes aesthetic recreation that reflects on the truths of history in fictional form.²³

Throughout my discussion of the *Heptameron's* stories, I shall be referring back to the importance of Oisille's reflections on the need to prepare for Fortune's pitfalls. She advocates a humanist, contemplative, and Evangelical perspective that contrasts with the *Heptameron's* representations of secular

22 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 68. "Si je me sentois aussy suffisante que les antiens, qui ont trouvé les arts, je inventerois quelque passetemps ou jeu pour satisfaire à la charge que me donnez; mais, congnoissant mon sçavoir et ma puissance, qui à peine peult rememorer les choses bien faictes, je me tiendrois bien heureuse d'ensuivre de près ceulx qui ont desja satisfait à vostre demande. Entre autres, je croy qu'il n'y a nulle de vous qui n'ait leu les cent Nouvelles de Bocace, nouvellement traduites d'ytalien en françois, que le roy François, premier de son nom, monseigneur le Daulphin, madame la Daulphine, madame Marguerite, font tant de cas, que si Bocace, du lieu où il estoit, les eut peu oyr, il debvoit resusciter à la louange de telles personnes. Et, à l'heure, j'oy les deux dames dessus nommées, avecq plusieurs autres de la court, qui se delibererent d'en faire autant, sinon en une chose differente de Bocace: c'est de n'escripre nulle nouvelle qui ne soit veritable histoire." *L'Heptaméron*, 9.

23 Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, 8. Hircan's reference to "hearing the gloss" explicitly refers to the allegorical tradition, but he perverts the expression by using it to refer to sexual pleasure. This points to the way the *Heptameron* plays with the idea of allegorical meaning and truth, playfully inverting the orders of spirit and flesh.

and courtly life. Courtly, public life in the *Heptameron* is a sphere of civility and decorum in which characters are motivated by the hidden desires for honors, profits, and pleasures.

Secrecy, Time, and Friendship

Secrecy becomes a central concern in the *Heptameron* because of its importance in medieval courtly literature. Scholarly works by Köhler—and more recently Stephen Jaeger and Ullrich Langer—have shown that love and courtship represent educational ideals in medieval and early modern literature. The *Heptameron* clearly assimilates this medieval courtly tradition in which secrecy has a central place, and it does so in critical ways.²⁴ The *Heptameron*'s narratives represent perfect love or friendship as needing to be kept secret and as leading to acts of courtly love service, but it also questions this ideal by exploring the undersides of courtly secrecy. Marguerite opposes secrecy in perfect friendship to the secret desires for honor, profit, and pleasure.

The *Heptameron* self-critically reflects on medieval traditions of love service. For some of Marguerite's great literary precedents, beginning with works such as *Tristan and Isolde* and Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*, indirectness and secrecy become central narrative concerns in courtly romance. Secret, noble love generates virtue because it places constraints on the warrior classes and functions as a civilizing force by requiring them to exercise discipline, courtesy, and politeness. Ennobling deeds serve as ends in themselves, without the need for reward or compensation.²⁵ Perfect friendship involves an asymmetrical relation between courtiers because exchanges are made without the expectation of return. Courtly secrecy requires that protagonists perform their acts of love and heroism without the anticipation of rewards other than those of virtue and honor. In these ways, courtly literature represents secrets and love

24 On the representation of courtly love and love service as educative and civilizing processes, see Erich Köhler, *L'aventure chevaleresque: idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois*, trans. Éliane Kaufholz (Paris: Gallimard, 1974). On early modern appropriations of classical ideas on perfect friendship, see Ullrich Langer, *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Boccaccio to Corneille* (Geneva: Droz, 1994), 30. On friendship in the Middle Ages, see Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

25 Gelernt writes appropriately that "... it is the longing for the lady's reward which ennobles man and gives meaning to the ideal of chivalry..." Jules Gelernt, *World of Many Loves: The Heptameron of Marguerite de Navarre* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 146–147.

service as enabling the establishment and preservation of social order. Secrets protect virtuous passions from being interpreted as signs of brute, uncivilized desire (for honor, profit, or pleasure), and they lead to honorable deeds.

The importance of love service becomes evident when one of the *Heptameron's* male storytellers, Simontaut, asserts that "If... all ladies were 'sans mercy,' we might as well put our horses to grass and let our armour go rusty till the next war comes along, and think about nothing but domestic affairs."²⁶ Without love service, the military class falls out of virtue. In this courtly tradition, to signify one's love indirectly by performing honorable and virtuous deeds ultimately benefits society as a whole, while the abandonment of secrecy degrades its highest spiritual, aristocratic ideals. As Dagoucín explains,

If we thought that ladies were really without love, we should prefer to be without life. I'm referring to those men who live only for the sake of the love of a lady. Though they may never reach their goal, they are sustained by hope, and by it are led on to accomplish countless honourable deeds until in old age their noble and virtuous passions turn into sufferings of another kind. If it were generally believed that ladies were incapable of love, then, instead of following the profession of arms, we should all turn into mere merchants, and instead of winning honour, seek only to pile up wealth!²⁷

In the *Heptameron*, love service represents an ethical model that has both a central thematic and narrative function. But while the positive ideals of secrecy, love service, and perfect friendship occupy important places in the *Heptameron*, other kinds of secrets (based on honor, profit, and pleasure) compete with them, complexifying their presence in the dialogues and stories.

26 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 456. "...s'il estoit... que les dames fussent sans mercy, nous pourrions bien faire reposer nos chevaux et faire rouler noz harnoys jusques à la premiere guerre, et ne faire que penser du mesnage." *L'Heptaméron*, 352.

27 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 532. "... si nous pensions les dames sans amour, nous voudrions estre sans vie. J'entends de ceux qui ne vivent que pour l'acquérir; et, encores qu'ilz n'y adviennent, l'esperance les soustient et leur faict faire mille choses honnorbables... Mais qui penseroit que les dames n'aymassent poinct, il faudroit en lieu d'hommes d'armes, faire des marchans; et, en lieu d'acquérir honneur, ne penser que à amasser du bien." *L'Heptaméron*, 419.

Courtly Secrets: Story Ten

The connection between secrecy, time, and courtly service governs the *Heptameron's* first *journée* because it serves as the narrators' immediate motive for telling their stories and for choosing their subject matter. The narrators generally tell their stories in relation to the perceived injustices they have experienced in their social, erotic, and spiritual exchanges with other men and women. The *Heptameron's* tenth story, Marguerite's longest and most studied *nouvelle*, casts a skeptical view on secrecy as an ethical and spiritualizing force. It does so by depicting the triumph of pleasure, profit, and honor over perfect friendship.²⁸ The protagonist, Amador, uses courtly secrecy as a cover, first for his virtuous intentions but then for malicious ones as well, which ultimately prevent his character from developing its potential for social and spiritual virtue.

The tenth story recounts how Amador, a young warrior, secretly courts a young aristocratic lady named Florida and how he attempts to win her as a perfect friend by overcoming a series of obstacles that distance them from each other. He uses strategy to maintain contact with her, which includes marrying one of her servants, named Avanturada. Avanturada serves as a screen to veil Amador's passions for Florida; she gives him a pretext to be in Florida's company and a means to protect his love from public opinion. But Amador decides to break his secrecy and to disclose his passion to Florida out of fear that the public will learn about his desire for her. This leads to a series of unfortunate events, including Avanturada's death, which causes Amador to abandon the codes of love service and to fall from virtue.

Although he attempts to ascend from profane and circumstantial friendships to the level of perfect friendship (*parfaite amitié*), as I shall be arguing throughout this section, profane motives ultimately destroy Amador's

28 The *Heptameron's* stories bring honor, profit, and pleasure together in a series of different combinations. For instance, the forty-first story, set during Christmas and in a church, connects the idea of news to the Gospel. Its characters are motivated by honor (and by its opposite, shame) or pleasure. In the dialogue about it, Saffredent discusses the feminine sex by opposing pleasure, profit, and honor to perfect friendship: profane motives, he argues, corrupted women's hearts, replacing God and love with hypocrisy and fiction. In the forty-second story, the characters are again motivated either by pleasure, profit, or honor, giving rise to a long discussion about the need for secrecy in courtly friendship in order to protect honor. Character motives in the forty-third and forty-ninth stories are also explicitly structured around different configurations of honor and pleasure. On the *Heptameron* and courtly love, see the recent discussion in Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, "The *Heptaméron*," 355–360 and notes.

courtship with Florida. He attempts to sacrifice pleasure, profit, and honor to pursue perfect friendship, as we see when he first meets her:

He could not fail to notice her daughter, Florida, who was then but twelve years of age. Never, he thought to himself, as he contemplated her grace and beauty, had he beheld so fair and noble a creature. If only she might look with favour upon him, that alone would give him more happiness than anything any other woman in the world could ever give him. For a long while he gazed at her. His mind was made up. He would love her. The promptings of reason were in vain. He would love her, even though she was not yet of an age to hear and understand the words of love. But his misgivings were as nothing against the firm hope that grew within him, as he promised himself that time and patient waiting would in the end bring his toils to a happy conclusion. Noble Love, through the power that is its own, and for no other cause, had entered Amador's breast and now held out to him the promise of a happy end, and the means of attaining it.²⁹

Parlemente here describes Amador in terms that echo Oisille's views in the first prologue regarding the importance of meditation as a form of prudence and devotion. Meditation on one's days and Scripture, in her view, represent a means of avoiding Fortune's pitfalls and of achieving *contentement*.

29 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 123. "... en regardant la beaulté et bonne grace de sa fille Floride, qui, pour l'heure, n'avoit que douze ans, se pensa en luy mesmes que c'estoit bien la plus honeste personne qu'il avoit jamais veue, et que, s'il pouvoit avoir sa bonne grace, il en seroit plus satisfait que de tous les biens et plaisirs qu'il pourroit avoir d'une autre. Et, après l'avoir longuement regardée, se delibera de l'aymer, quelque impossibilité que la raison luy meist au devant, tant pour la maison dont elle estoit, que pour l'age, qui ne pouvoit encore entendre telz propos. Mais contre ceste craincte se fortisfoit d'une bonne esperance, se promectant à luy-mesmes que le temps et la patience apporteroient heureuse fin à ses labours." *L'Heptaméron*, 56. On the ambiguities in Amador's character, see, among others, Lucien Febvre, *Amour sacré, amour profane: autour de l'Heptaméron* (Paris: Gallimard, 1944; reprint, 1996); Raymond Lebègue, "La femme qui mutile son visage (l'Heptaméron X)," *Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres* (1959): 176–184; Donald Stone, "Narrative Technique in l'Heptaméron," *Studi francesi* 11 (1973): 435–447; Marcel Tetel, "Une réévaluation de la dixième nouvelle de l'Heptaméron," *Neuphilologische mitteilungen* 72 (1971): 565–9. For an insightful close reading of the tenth story, see Laurence Mall, "'Pierres ou bestes.' Les corps dans la dixième nouvelle de l'Heptaméron de Marguerite de Navarre," *French forum* 27 (1992): 169–190. Critics have debated the shifts in Amador's character, but they have not observed how these levels of motivation also correspond to the profane values that Christian humanist thinkers criticized.

Yet, Parlamente transposes Oisille's ideas into the context of courtly service. Parlamente represents Amador's character as being conflicted between reason and impossibility, on the one hand, and Fortune and love, on the other:

But love and Fortune, seeing him ill-provided for by his parents, and resolving to make him their paragon, bestowed upon him through the gift of virtue and valour that which the laws of the land denied him. He was experienced in matters of war, and much sought after by noble lords and princes. He did not have to go out of his way to ask for rewards. More often than not he had to refuse them.³⁰

Amador pursues Florida under the signs of Love and Fortune, implying that his character embodies contradictory forces. These conflicting impulses push him towards both circumstantial and perfect friendships. Whereas at first he engages in courtship by keeping his love secret and building trust over time, he exhibits a further level of hidden desires. Amador hides not only his passion for Florida but also, behind that, antagonistic impulses that ultimately prevent his character's progression towards perfect friendship.

There are numerous examples of this opposition between perfect and circumstantial friendship throughout the *Heptameron*. In the fourteenth story, for example, different orders of secrecy collide when a courtier named Bonnavet avenges himself on a woman for having refused his courtship. Bonnavet first pretends to forge a "perfect friendship" with the man she actually loves by masking his real intentions. He then deceives the lady's lover by sharing (*compter*) secrets about various past adventures or fortunes with him. Finally, to exact his revenge, Bonnavet disguises himself as her lover, deceives her about his identity, and takes her to bed. Ironically, upon learning his true identity, the woman then abandons her lover for not keeping their love secret (for he told Bonnavet about it), and she then develops a friendship with Bonnavet.

Another example can be found in the twenty-first story, where a similar idea of Fortune is at work. The protagonists forge a relationship based on their fortunes (or misfortunes), which first leads to a perfect friendship and then to a secret marriage. The protagonists' courtship develops secretly, but to the reader's surprise, it reveals itself to be based solely on avarice and ambition.

30 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 124. "Si est-ce que Amour et Fortune, le voyans delassé de ses parens, delibererent de y faire leur chef d'œuvre, et luy donnerent, par le moyen de la vertu, ce que les loys du país luy refusoient. Il estoit fort adonné en l'estat de la guerre, et tant aymé de tous seigneurs et princes, qu'il refusoit plus souvent leurs biens, qu'il n'avoit soulcuy de leur en demander." *L'Heptaméron*, 56–57.

This revelation occurs through a surprising plot reversal, which suggests that the male protagonist was being deceitful throughout the story despite his claims to be disinterested in profit. The female protagonist, Rolandine, indicates that her love is based on nothing other than her husband's pure and simple virtue and that it has no part in pleasure, profit, or honor (flesh, ambition, or pride). The story's central news—or rather, its surprising event—occurs when the male protagonist abandons his wife for another woman, forcing us to question whether their love was ever real. The marriage appears to be a mask to hide his desire to gain riches. The motives of avarice and ambition stand opposed to perfect friendship in the twenty-first story. They become masked as friendship but then exposed through a narrative reversal that is presented under the sign of Fortune.

As the narrator indicates in the tenth story, Fortune enables Amador to initiate his secret courtship with Florida, but it also threatens courtly love. Fortune threatens the ethical model of perfect friendship. Amador's motives fall from the order of perfection and honesty, as we see when he uses secrecy as a strategy for seizing opportune moments and for taking the rewards that he believes Florida owes him. Fortune derails the protagonist's development towards achieving perfect friendship.³¹ As Amador attempts but fails to attain perfect friendship, the value of secrecy changes from a courtly and spiritual ideal to a political and military strategy. Once Amador becomes separated from Florida, he

... devised his grand scheme—not a scheme to win back Florida's heart, for he deemed her lost for ever, but a scheme to score a victory over her as his mortal enemy, for that was how she now appeared. Throwing all reason to the winds, and setting aside all fear of death, he took the greatest risk of his life. His mind was made up. He was not to be deterred from

31 As Patch has showed, medieval literature represents the Goddess Fortuna as dealing in adventures and as having two faces, being both ugly and beautiful. This dual feature recalls Oisille's assertion in the prologue that meditation on Scripture overcomes the ugliness associated with ill fortune. Patch shows that Fortuna is represented as blindfolded, signifying her disregard for merit because she gives and withholds recognition arbitrarily. She withholds financial wealth and causes suffering. Men can use fortitude, courage, defiance, and wisdom against her, but only in vain. She resembles love because both are blind. She is a goddess of momentary time and thus associates with *occasio*, or chance. She intervenes in matters of human love as well. Howard R. Patch, *The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature* (New York: Octagon Books, 1967). For a recent work on fortune in medieval French literature, see Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces: The Roman de la Rose and the Poetics of Contingency* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

his aim. Since his credit stood high with the governor, he was able to get himself appointed to a mission to the King for the purpose of discussing some secret campaign directed against the town of Leucate. He also managed to get himself issued with orders to inform the Countess of Aranda of the plan, and to take her advice before meeting the King. Knowing that Florida was there, he went post-haste into Aranda, and on his arrival sent a friend in secrecy to tell the Countess that he wished to see her, and that they must meet only at dead of night, without anyone else knowing about it.³²

Amador acts under the sign of Fortune when he begins to seize opportune moments to obtain what he wants. The “force d’amour” spurs him to develop secretive stratagems to take the rewards that he believes he merits. Fortune drives him to accelerate the process of courtship and to circumvent the gradual temporal unfolding required by the rules of courtly service. Although, as we saw earlier, Oisille’s Evangelical beliefs serve to avert the inconveniences caused by the figure of Fortune, Amador acts in the name of Fortune. Through its surprising turns of fate, Fortune destroys the process of perfecting friendship, which requires and depends on secrecy, discretion, patience, and trust.

Secrecy and Marriage

As we have seen, the tenth story’s focus on secrecy revolves around Amador using his wife Avanturada as a tactic to overcome the distance that separates him from Florida. He attempts to overcome the social difference separating him from Florida by marrying Avanturada, who unknowingly functions as a cover for his passions. He uses secrecy to protect himself from rumor, and by marrying Avanturada, he comes to learn “the innermost secrets” of Florida’s

32 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 146. He “... imagine une invention très grande, non pour gaingner le cueur de Floride, car il le tenoit pour perdu, mais pour avoir la victoire de son ennemye, puis que telle se faisoit contre luy. Il meit arriere tout le conseil de raison, et mesme la paour de la mort, dont il se mectoit en hazard; delibera et conclud d’ainsy faire. Or fait tant envers le grand gouverneur, qu’il fut par luy député pour venir parler au Roy de quelque entreprinse secrette qui se faisoit sur Locatte; et se fait commander de communiquer son entreprinse à la contesse d’Arande avant que la declairer au Roy, pour en prendre son bon conseil. Et vint en poste tout droict en la conté d’Arande, où il sçavoit qu’estoit Floride, et envoya secrettement à la contesse ung sien amy luy declarer sa venue, luy priant la tenir secrette, et qu’il peust parler à elle la nuict, sans que personne en sceust riens.” *L’Heptaméron*, 77.

heart.³³ Although Amador's virtues initially develop through courtly secrecy and love service, this comes to an end when Avanturada dies from a fall after hearing the *nouvelle* that he has been released from prison. The figure of Fortune arguably removes Avanturada and thus the possibility of ennoblement from Amador. Her death marks the moment when secrecy as the condition for courtly love service becomes subverted by Fortune. Amador and Florida enjoy ennobling friendship for a brief period of time, but his inability to uphold friendship manifests itself when he abandons courtly secrecy after Avanturada's death. Amador's failure to sustain friendship shows that he remains circumscribed by his status as a warrior. By ultimately demanding that Florida recognize and reward his love service, he betrays the conventions of courtship and perfect friendship.

The *Heptameron's* tenth story echoes an opposition between silence and speech made in the eighth story. Amador attempts to act prudently in his courtship by first approaching Florida and then declaring himself to her, saying "Tell me, [my Lady], is it better to speak or to die?"³⁴ He equates secrecy with death here, because the silence metaphorically kills him. This directly recalls the dialogue that follows the eighth story, where the narrator Dagoucin asserted that

... if love is based on a woman's beauty, charm, and favours, and if our aim is merely pleasure, ambition or profit, then such love can never last. For if the whole foundation on which our love is based should collapse, then love will fly from us and there will be no love left in us. But I am utterly convinced that if a man loves with no other aim, no other desire, than to love truly, he will abandon his soul in death rather than allow his love to abandon his heart.³⁵

To love well (*bien aimer*) here means to hide well (*bien celer*). When Amador decides to declare his passion to Florida, he tacitly alludes to but also contradicts Dagoucin's view on the risks of revealing perfect friendship. Whereas Dagoucin equates speech with death, Amador equates it with life. In so doing, he violates

33 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 124.

34 Ibid., 129; "M'amy, je vous supplie me conseiller lequel vault mieulx parler ou mourir?" *L'Heptaméron*, 62.

35 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 113. "... si nostre amour est fondée sur la beaulté, bonne grace, amour et faveur d'une femme, et nostre fin soit plaisir, honneur ou proffict, l'amour ne peult longuement durer; car, si la chose sur quoy nous la fondons default, nostre amour s'envolle hors de nous. Mais je suis ferme à mon oppinion, que celluy qui ayme, n'ayant autre fin ne desir que bien aymer, laissera plus tost son ame par la mort, que ceste forte amour saille de son cueur." *L'Heptaméron*, 48.

a fundamental code of courtly love as it is depicted in the *Heptameron*, according to which love must be kept secret. Moreover, this passage suggests that, when based on the external values of beauty and grace, friendship becomes degraded to the level of profane pleasures, profits, and honors. It is thus significant that these are the very virtues that Amador admires in Florida from the story's beginning.

Amador discloses his love to Florida, and in so doing he compares courtly love to war, foreshadowing his own inability to sustain courtly friendship and secrecy. The passage reinforces how his character remains circumscribed by intentions that cannot sustain the trials of love service. Amador explains:

My Lady, there are two reasons why I have not yet told you of the feelings I have for you. One reason is that I hoped to give you proof of my love through long and devoted service. The other is that I feared that you would consider it overweening presumption—that I, an ordinary nobleman, should dare to aspire to the love of a lady of birth so high. Even if I were, like you, my Lady, of princely estate, a heart so true and loyal as your own would not suffer such talk of love from anyone but the son of the Infante of Fortune, who has taken possession of your heart. Yet, my Lady, just as in the hardships of war one may be compelled to destroy one's own land, to lay waste one's rising crops, in order to prevent the enemy taking advantage of them, even so do I now seek to anticipate the fruit that I had hoped to reap only in the fullness of time, in order to prevent our enemies from taking advantage of it to your loss.³⁶

Amador's agricultural and military metaphors show that he remains limited by his social and military rank because he reduces perfect friendship to a comparison with military conflict. Whereas secrecy ought to protect his courtship

36 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 130. "Ma dame, je ne vous ay encores voulu dire la très grande affection que je vous porte, pour deux raisons: l'une, que j'entendois par long service vous en donner l'experience; l'autre, que je doubtois que vous estimissiez gloire en moy, qui suis ung simple gentil homme, de m'adresser en lieu qu'il ne m'appartient de regarder. Et encores, quant je serois prince comme vous, la loyauté de vostre cueur ne permectroit que aultre que celluy qui en a prins la possession, filz de l'Infant Fortuné, vous tienne propos d'amitié. Mais, ma dame, tout ainsy que la necessité en une forte guerre contrainct faire le degast de son propre bien, et ruyner le bled en herbe, de paour que l'ennemy n'en puisse faire son proffict, ainsi prens-je le hazard de avancer le fruit que avecq le temps j'esperois cueillir, pour garder que les ennemys de vous et de moy n'en peussent faire leur proffict à vostre dommaige." *L'Heptaméron*, 62–63.

from false public judgments, Amador advocates the breaking of secrecy as a form of prudence.³⁷

The tension between Amador's complex motives prevents him from transcending circumstantial friendships and attaining perfect friendship. Florida doubts Amador's motives from the moment he confides in her. This casts suspicion on his declaration of love, as we see when Florida says to him,

In fact I can think of no reason why I should not grant your wishes, except perhaps for one anxiety that troubles my mind. You have no reason to address me in the way you do. If you already have what you desire, what can it be that now makes you tell me about it in such an emotional manner?³⁸

To reassure her, Amador echoes Florida's own use of architectural imagery, and he asserts that his reason for declaring his passion lies in the need for secrecy. Secrecy, Amador explains, protects against *médisans*:

But let me explain, my Lady, that the man who desires to build an edifice that will endure throughout eternity should take the utmost care to lay a safe and sure foundation. So it is that I, who desire most earnestly to serve you through all eternity, should take the greatest care that I have the means to ensure not only that I shall remain always by you, but that I shall be able to prevent all others from knowing of the great love I bear you. For, though my love is pure and noble enough to be announced

37 By contrast, Ennasuite had, in the fourth story, told a story that illustrates the opposite of Amador's behavior, as she depicts a courtly lover repenting for his abuses of courtly codes, exclaiming, "Beaulté! tu as maintenant loyer de ton merite, car, par ta vaine promesse, j'ay entrepris une chose impossible, et qui peut-estre, en lieu d'augmenter mon contentement, est redoublement de mon malheur, estant asseuré que, si elle sçaiet que, contre la promesse que je luy ay faicte, j'ay entrepris ceste follie, je perdray l'honneste et commune frequentation que j'ay plus que nul autre avecq elle; ce que ma gloire a bien deservy; car, pour faire valloir ma beaulté et, bonne grace, je ne la devois pas cacher en tenebres pour gaingner l'amour de son cueur; je ne devois pas essayer à prandre par force son chaste corps; mais debvois, par long service et humble patience, actendre que amour en fut victorieux, pour ce que sans luy n'ont pouvoir toute la vertu et puissance de l'homme." Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, 30–31.

38 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 132. "Je ne sçai che chose qui me doibve empescher de faire response selon vostre desir, sinon une craincte que j'ay en mon cueur, fondée sur le peu d'occasion que vous avez de me tenir telz propos; car, si vous avez ce que vous demandez, qui vous contrainct d'en parler si affectionnement?" *L'Heptaméron*, 64.

to the whole world, yet there are people who will never understand a lover's soul, and whose pronouncements will always belie the truth. The rumours that result are nonetheless unpleasant for being untrue.³⁹

Amador is correct that secrecy prevents others from "basing judgments" on external signs, but he does not perceive that secrecy can also alienate lovers from each other. Secrecy not only creates a protective distance between lovers and their publics, but it can also become a strategic tool between lovers, as Amador shows. The tenth story thus represents secrecy as enabling but also threatening perfect friendship; it represents discretion as the necessary means of protecting virtuous passions from erroneous public judgments, but it also depicts it as potentially undermining courtship.

Amador's risk at first succeeds. The two lovers become ennobled through their exchanges of love service, as we see when Florida "...set herself to perform all manner of good and virtuous deeds, hoping thereby to acquire the reputation of being the most perfect lady in the land, and worthy to have a man such as Amador devoted to her service."⁴⁰ Amador also begins to transcend circumstantial friendships for perfect friendship. Nonetheless, this narrative sequence involving secrecy, love service, and ennoblement ends with Amador's capture during battle, his release, and his final defeat on the battlefield as a result of leaked secrets.

The tension between secrecy and news (*nouvelle*) governs the narrative unfolding of courtship in the tenth story. As we have seen, Amador's character does not have the moral constancy required for perfect friendship and secrecy; he remains unstable and untrustworthy in his pursuit of noble love. When Avanturada dies, the narrator implicitly establishes an opposition between secrecy and prudence, on the one hand, and the effects of news and Fortune, on the other. As the narrator recounts, Florida

39 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 132. "Mais entendez, ma dame, que celluy qui veult bastir ung edifice perpetuel, il doit regarder à prendre ung seur et ferme fondement: parquoy, moy, qui desire perpetuellement demorer en vostre service, je doibs regarder non seulement les moyens pour me tenir près de vous, mais empescher qu'on ne puisse congnoistre la très grande affection que je vous porte; car, combien qu'elle soyt tant honneste qu'elle se puisse prescher partout, si est-ce que ceulx qui ignorent le cueur des amans ont souvent jugé contre verité. Et de cella vient autant mauvais bruit, que si les effects estoient meschans." *L'Heptaméron*, 64.

40 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 135. "...se met à faire toutes choses si bonnes et vertueuses, qu'elle eseroit par cella actaindre le bruit des plus parfaites dames, et d'estre réputée digne d'avoir ung tel serviteur que Amadour." *L'Heptaméron*, 67.

... was almost at the point where she was ready not merely to accept Amador as a devoted servant, but to admit him as a sure and perfect lover. But it was then that a most unhappy accident occurred. Amador received word from the King to go to him immediately on urgent business. Avanturada was very upset at the news, and fainted. Unfortunately she happened to be standing at the top of a flight of stairs. She fell, and injured herself so badly that she never recovered. Florida was deeply affected by Avanturada's death. There could be no consolation for her now. It was as if she felt herself bereft of all relatives and friends. She went into deep mourning for her loss. To Amador the blow was even more overwhelming, for not only had he lost one of the most virtuous wives who ever lived, but he had also lost all hope now of continuing to be near Florida.⁴¹

The news of Amador's departure causes Avanturada's death and thereby catalyzes the central development in Amador's character because it causes him to lose both his control over events and his ability to reason. Rather than seeking another screen lady, he ultimately abandons courtship and attempts to take what he wants from Florida by underhanded means. At the moment when Amador abandons courtship, he chooses risk and reward over patience and merit. The narrator explains,

Now he despaired of ever being able to return to see her again, and, racked by a love that had been hidden away within him, he made up his mind to make one last desperate gamble—to risk losing all, or to gain everything and treat himself to one short hour of the bliss that he considered he had earned.⁴²

41 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 139. "Sur le point qu'elle estoit presque toute gaingnée de le recevoir, non à serviteur, mais à seur et parfait amy, arriva une malheureuse fortune; car le Roy, pour quelque affaire d'importance, manda incontinent Amadour; dont sa femme eut si grand regret, que, en oyant ces nouvelles, elle s'esvanouyt, et tomba d'un degré où elle estoit, dont elle se blessa si fort, que oncques puis n'en releva. Floride, qui, par ceste mort, perdoit toute consolation, feyt tel dueil que peult faire celle qui se sent destituée de ses parens et amys. Mais encores le print plus mal en gré Amadour; car, d'un costé, il perdoit l'une des femmes de bien qui oncques fut, et de l'autre, le moyen de povoir jamais reveoir Floride; dont il tomba en telle tristesse, qu'il cuida soubdainement morir." *L'Heptameron*, 72.

42 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 140. "Luy, que se voyoit du tout desesperé de jamais la povoir recevoir, que si longuement l'avoit servie et n'en avoit jamais eu nul autre traictement que vous avez oy, fut tant combatu de l'amour dissimulée et du desesperoir qui

Amador decides to reward himself instantly, foregoing the codes of courtship. The “force of love” (*force d’amour*) dominates Amador, leading him to violate and undermine civility and courtship, with the result that secrecy ceases to function as a spiritualizing force.

Ludic Secrets: Story Eleven

In stark contrast with the tenth story, the *Heptameron*’s eleventh story illustrates how secrecy can be approached in a wide variety of ways in Marguerite’s narratives.⁴³ Through a misogynist and scatological narrative, the eleventh story shows how *nouvelles*, as a preeminently secular genre, focus on secrecy in ways that serve to unmask religious abuse. The story’s central sequence begins when a woman named Roncex visits a Franciscan monastery and asks a lady named La Mothe to accompany her to the restroom. By nature shameful and secretive (*honteuse et secrete*), Roncex decides to enter alone, only to find the toilet covered in the Franciscans’ excrement. Needing to relieve herself immediately, she proceeds to lift her robe and sit on the toilet seat (or *anneau*, a motif that appears in several stories in Day Two) and, “by chance” (*fortune*), soils both her clothes and feet while calling out to La Mothe for help.

Roncex’s call for help becomes a source of misunderstanding on account of the Franciscans’ reputation as a corrupt order. On hearing her call, La Mothe mistakenly interprets Roncex’s outcry as a sign that Franciscans are hiding in the room and trying to rape her. La Mothe then calls for a group of men to come rescue Roncex from rape, but when the men enter the room and see no Franciscans (they see nothing except the *ordure dont elle avait toutes les fesses engluées*), they laugh at the spectacle (*beau spectacle*). Meanwhile, an ashamed Roncex attempts to cover herself, which only causes her to become further soiled and ultimately requires her to strip nude and change clothes before leaving the monastery. La Mothe acts in accordance with the *contes* she has previously heard about Franciscans violating women in secret spaces. Like the tenth story, story eleven thus self-reflexively makes the ideas of fortune, noise, rumor, news, and storytelling central to the narrative’s structure and development.

luy monstroït tous les moyens de la hanter perduz, qu’il se delibera de jouer à quicte ou à double, pour du tout la perdre ou du tout la gaingner, et se payer en une heure du bien qu’il pensoit avoir merit  .” *L’Heptam  ron*, 72.

43 For an insightful psychoanalytically oriented reading of this story, see Patricia Francis Cholakian, *Rape and Writing*, 105–116.

Secrecy refers here both to feminine privacy and shame but also to religious abuse because of the assumption that the Franciscans are raping Roncex.⁴⁴ The protagonist is secretive due to her sense of honor, which contrasts with the depravity of the setting, which is an “obscure space” that is “common” to the Franciscans. The narrator, Nomerfide, describes the bathroom as a place where the Franciscans have *rendu compte en ce lieu de toutes leurs viandes*. The word *compte* here implicitly refers to the secrets and stories (*contes*) that Franciscans share with each other in private about their sins, but it also metaphorically alludes to the act of defecation. The narrator describes the feces that “covers” the room in mythological terms as the *moût de Bacchus et de la déesse Cérès*. This playfully invokes the idea of allegorical “covers” and serves to critique the way allegory becomes used to mystify and ennoble matters that are morally abject. The narrator’s allusion to profane mythology thus parodies the idea of the allegorical veil or cover. By extension, the story suggests that the Franciscans cover their religious abuse in fables about their dignity as providers of spiritual care. Moreover, the word *viande* refers to the Franciscans’ sinful pleasures but also ironically to their feces and, ultimately, to the secrets of their private morality. This directly contrasts with the metaphors of spiritual food in the *Heptameron*’s prologues, where they are used to describe spiritual increase through Evangelical devotion.

Story 13: Secrecy and Narrative Sequence

In the thirteenth story, questions of secrecy also arise from the tension between private and public life. The story’s narrator (Parlemente) recounts how a devout couple—a young woman and an older man—decide to journey to Jerusalem and enlist the help of a military Captain to do so.⁴⁵ The idea of the journey (*journée*) stands at the center of this story, giving it a self-reflexive dimension given that the *Heptameron*’s *nouvelles* are themselves organized into days, or *journées*. But in the thirteenth story, it is a journey that never takes place.

44 On the *Heptameron*’s Evangelism and anti-clericalism, see Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, “The *Heptaméron*,” 331–350.

45 In the *Heptameron*’s thirteenth story, secrecy and news function as discursive poles that structure the narrative; the story confronts secrecy and friendship with their opposites, news and violent hostility. The figure of the veil figures centrally in the story’s moment of central dramatic recognition, and it also serves in the ensuing dialogue as a central image serving to describe gender relations in court life. The story is appropriately narrated by Dagoucin, the *Heptameron*’s biggest advocate of courtly secrecy.

The Captain has the potential to transcend his status as a mere figure of war and adventure through a spiritual journey to Jerusalem. He promises the couple that, on returning from a battle against the Turks, he will return to guide them to the Holy Land. While planning the voyage, he secretly falls in love with the young married woman and appears to become increasingly devoted to the Christian faith, although it is unclear whether he is merely using the appearance of religiosity as a means of courting the young wife or whether he is conforming to her exemplary piety. In the course of his conversations with the married woman, the Captain discloses that he has an estranged wife whom he exploited and abandoned. He reveals that he hopes to guide the married couple to Jerusalem as a way of making penance for abusing his estranged wife's trust.

The young married woman in the story represents the Captain's hope of achieving a spiritual friendship through love service. But after his departure for the war against the Turks, the Captain declares his love for the young married woman in a letter, and he encloses a diamond ring in the envelope as a sign of his loyalty. She refuses the ring, but rather than reject the Captain, she sends the ring along with a pseudonymous letter to his estranged wife. In this letter, she presents the ring to the estranged wife as a token of the Captain's wish for conciliation. But shortly thereafter, the Captain is killed in an ambush when the secrecy of his military mission becomes betrayed.

We can see how secrets stand at odds with narrative sequence, as Kermode suggests, when the Captain loses his command of speech. He attempts to suppress his desires out of respect for civil decorum, and he shows himself capable of manipulating narrative sequence as he tells his stories about his past. The Captain's paralyzing respect for propriety and decorum—for the woman's apparent devotion to her husband and for Christianity—leaves him torn between “the desire to speak his love and the fear of doing so.”⁴⁶ To compensate for lack of direct expressivity, he uses religion as a cover for his profane desires. In his devotion, he speaks about the “holy places of Jerusalem, of the places that bore the signs of that great love which Jesus Christ has borne us,” using religion and Christ's passion as “covers” for his erotic drives. But as his desire grows, his capacity for discourse falters in the married couple's bedroom. With the couple lying in bed and the Captain at their side, he

... listened, but paid less attention to what the lady was saying than to the lady herself. In fact, he fell so violently in love with her, that while he was telling her about his adventures at sea, he would get completely

46 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 169.

confused, mixing up the port of Marseilles with the Archipelago, and talking about horses when he meant ships, like somebody who had quite lost his wits.⁴⁷

The Captain's inability to command narrative sequences results from the difficulty he experiences keeping secrets. At the same time, the young wife's role changes from an erotic to a spiritual one as the Captain confesses to her that, after exploiting and abandoning his wife, he became an adventurer on the seas, winning honor and profit, and then entered the King's service in the name of holy war.

Between Silence and Speech

The Captain's long lyric epistle, which he sends to the young wife with a diamond ring, thematizes the experience of time, secrecy, and love service. It represents the Captain's fantasy of fulfilling his promise to return from his military campaign to guide the couple in pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The Captain writes that he wishes to "conserve" his health and life (*santé et . . . vie*) to serve the young wife. His "silent tongue" (*long celer*) and "taciturnity" create a "necessity" that can be consoled only by speaking and expressing. The alternative to direct expression is, as he writes, to die (*Fors de parler ou de souffrir la mort*).⁴⁸ This recalls the tenth story's association of silence with death.

The epistle reveals the Captain's secret, and at the same time, it personifies his need for expressivity through the figure of "Fair Speech." The personified figure of "Speech" (*Parler*) insists on either disclosing itself or suffering the consequence of death.⁴⁹ The letter thus aligns secrecy with death, on the one hand, and expressivity with life and vitality. The Captain writes,

Fain would I wipe him from this sorry screed,
Lest you refuse his plaintive voice to heed,
This voice of foolish, craven Speech, who now

47 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 168. "... regardant plus à elle qu'à sa parole, fut si fort amoureux d'elle que souvent, en lui parlant des voyages qu'il avais faits sur la mer, mêlait l'embarquement de Marseille avec l'Archipel, et en voulant parler d'un navire, parlait d'une cheval, comme celui qui était ravi et hors de son sens." *L'Heptaméron*, 98.

48 Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, 100–102.

49 The twenty-sixth story follows a similar logic: the female protagonist dies as a result of not confessing her love. By the time she reveals it, she is lying on her deathbed.

Does safe in absence boldly show his brow,
 Where in your presence once he hung his head,
 And sighs, 'Twere surely better I were dead
 Than eek through words my sorry life to ease,
 If I should then my lady sore displease. . . .'⁵⁰

In these ways, the story's final sequences synthesize several of the *nouvelles'* essential features in the *Heptameron*. In the thirteenth story, as in Amador's story, the idea of news (or *nouvelle*) has different and competing levels of meaning. Ultimately, in both stories, the word comes to refer to news received about events in war. In both cases, courtly love service takes on spiritual implications that become subverted by the protagonist's breaking of secrecy. And like Amador, the Captain is betrayed by and dies on account of the failure to contain secrets. This occurs because his allies, the Rhodians, reveal his secret "enterprise" to the enemy. The failure to maintain political secrecy and its military consequences, as in the tenth story, lead to the protagonist's death and to the ultimate failure of perfect friendship.

Secrets in Ritual Union: Day Seven, Prologue

The prologue to the *Heptameron's* seventh day connects secular storytelling with Scriptural mystery through Oisille's religious rituals. Oisille administers Scripture's "saving nourishment" (*salutaire pasture*), and she reads directly from the book of Acts that, as the narrator says, deals with the "glorious knights and apostles of Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke" (*glorieux chevaliers et apôtres de Jesus Christ*).⁵¹ Equally surprising, Oisille refers to scriptural narratives as *contes* that, she argues, should inspire a "desire to see" the return of apostolic Christianity and to lament the corruption ("difformity") of the *devisants'* historical age by comparison with apostolic times.⁵² The seventh

50 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 170–171. "Je l'ay voulu de ce papier oster,/ Craignant que poinct ne voulusse escouter/Ce sot parler, qui se monstre en absence,/ Qui trop estoit crainctif en tel presence;/ Mieux vault, en me taisant, mourir,/ Que de vouloir ma vie secourir/Pour ennuyer celle que j'aime tant. . . .'*L'Heptaméron*, 101.

51 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 476; *L'Heptaméron*, 370.

52 Note that the *Heptameron's* only other use of the word "difformitez" refers to when Floride damages her face with a stone. As Isabelle Diu has noted, Jacques Gohory's preface to the tenth book of *Amadis* (1555) values the creativeness and symbolic qualities of chivalric *contes*. He does so in terms that parallel those of the seventh prologue. Describing how Francis I had the *Guiron le Courtois* read to him, he writes "Il s'en faisoit lire en sa

prologue juxtaposes secular storytelling and humanist Evangelical views on Scripture and apostolic Christianity in a more condensed manner than previous prologues, and it is clear that apostolic Christianity represents the idea of unity through devotion, because the *devisants* then attend Church and ask for God's grace "in the union and fellowship in which the apostles themselves prayed together" (*en l'union que les apôtres faisaient leur oraison*).⁵³ Moreover, the *devisants* participate in the *messe du Saint-Esprit* in "great devotion" and thereafter reflect on apostolic life to such an extent that they almost forget to tell (*raconter*) their stories (*nouvelles*).⁵⁴ Devotion begins to consume their use of time, but they nonetheless continue to tell their stories, which, as we have seen, revolve around the lack of unity and faithfulness between men and women. The word *conte* applies to the contents of Scripture, and the "glorious knights" refer to the characters in sacred narrative. In this way, Scripture and fiction come to overlap. The idea that Scripture describes "glorieux chevaliers" signals how the *Heptameron* crosses Scripture with popular genres such as chivalric novels.⁵⁵

In this prologue, Oisille's character points to the boundaries between devotional practice and storytelling when she elects Saffredent to tell his *nouvelle*. This marks the point where the discourse on apostolic Christianity gives way to debates between male and female narrators and to the stratagems they use to deceive each other. The devotional unity achieved by the *devisants*—through the Gospel and through apostolic ideals—contrasts with these debates. The seventh prologue brings these two spheres together through the term

chambre, il ammonestoit les gentilshommes là presents de les [romans de chevalerie] manier aucunesfois en leurs maisons, leur remonstrant par sa Royale Éloquence que sous l'escorce de ces joyeuses narrations y gisoit de bonnes instructions morales pour la noblesse en exaulsant les vertueux faits et en blamant les vicieux, en recommandant tousjours l'adoration et reverence de Dieu, la defence du bon droit principalement des personnes pitoyables, damoyselles, veufves, orfelins..." Cited in Isabelle Diu, *Mémoire des chevaliers*, 23. See also the following works indexed by Diu's work: Philippe Ménard, "La réception des romans de chevalerie à la fin du Moyen Âge et au XVI^e siècle," in *Bulletin bibliographique de la société internationale arthurienne*, 49 (1997): 234–273 and Nicole Cazauran, "Amadis de Gaule en 1540: Un nouveau 'roman de chevalerie'?", in *Cahiers V.-L. Saulnier. Les Amadis en France au XVI^e siècle* 17 (2000): 21–39.

53 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 476; *L'Heptaméron*, 370. For a close reading of this prologue and a discussion on the relation of signs to transcendence in the *Heptameron*, see Jan Miernowski, *Signes dissimilaires: la quête des noms divins dans la poésie française de la renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 63–89.

54 On the theme of forgetting in Day Seven, see Jan Miernowski, *Signes dissimilaires*, 63–89.

55 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 476; *L'Heptaméron*, 370. On the *Heptameron*'s use of Biblical texts, see Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, "The *Heptaméron*," 366.

nouvelle. Oisille elects Saffredent to tell a tale, knowing that his story will amplify the divisions between men and women. Saffredent claims that his story aims not so much to instigate debate as to depict gender relations as they are practiced. He protests that speaking the truth does not necessarily entail being a *médisant*. The oath to speak the truth thus returns as a central concern along with the importance of secrecy in narrative. Saffredent asserts that he will not lose “the favour of all virtuous women, merely because I tell of the misdeeds of those who are foolish. For I know from experience what it is just to be banished from their sight—indeed, had I been [thus] deprived of their good grace, I should not at this moment be alive.”⁵⁶ Storytelling represents a descent from the spiritual unity that Oisille establishes in the prologues. But storytelling and devotional praise are not strictly opposed here. The *Heptameron* steeps its readers in the world of secrecy in the sense of profane stories about deceitful motives (honor, profit, pleasure), but it also presents its readers with a model for unity in devotion to the Christian mystery that declares itself through Scripture.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the way in which the semantic relation between secrecy and news functions in a selection of Marguerite’s prologues, *nouvelles*, and literary dialogues, focusing on how that semantic relation occupies a central narrative and thematic importance for the text as a whole. In Chapter 3, I discussed Marguerite’s poems in connection with secrecy and mystery, both in anagogical and allegorical terms. We saw that her poems adopt a model of revelation that stresses the knowledge of sin, and we paid specific attention to the mirror as a simultaneously philosophical, devotional, and literary motif. In examining the *Heptameron*, we have seen that secrecy and news form a structure for exploring the relations between intention and action. I have shown that Marguerite’s *Heptameron* aligns fictional and Evangelical secrecy, and I have shown how the ideas of secrecy that she develops in her devotional poetry represent one aspect among others in the *Heptameron*’s world. Secrecy appears as a central concern in almost all the *Heptameron*’s stories, as both a point of intersection and of conflict between spiritual discourses in devotional life, on the one hand, and in courtly culture, on the other.

56 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, 476–477; *L’Heptaméron*, 435.

Conclusion: Secrecy and Covers between Literature, Philosophy, and Theology

Early sixteenth-century humanists and Evangelicals imbued their literature with questions pertaining to secrecy as a medium for both disclosing and concealing sacred truths. They turned to ancient and medieval traditions of literary and theological thought about the role of aesthetics in theology and devotion, in which the metaphor for secrecy as “cover” or veil (*integumentum, involucreum*) has a long-established and well-known tradition of scholarship, which nonetheless has not been studied specifically in connection with secrecy. The metaphor of the veil also raises questions concerning how human reason and discourse can be appropriately transferred from worldly to divine matters? How can human language describe divine essence in its absolute separation from the world?

Marguerite’s spiritual directors, Lefèvre and Briçonnet, draw especially on pseudo-Dionysius’s theory of metaphor (*transumptio*) to theorize how names can be attributed to divine essence in theological speculation. Briçonnet combines theological and literary theories of metaphor (*transumptio*) to emphasize the ambivalent place that human discourse, and figural language in particular, occupy in Christian piety. As Chapters 1 and 2 discussed, Erasmus, Lefèvre, and Briçonnet rearticulated ancient and medieval concepts of secrecy in various philosophical and literary genres in their effort to reform and cultivate spiritual life. They drew on ideas of secrecy in their pedagogical reform initiatives, arguing that the sacramental and pastoral values traditionally associated with the Roman Church need not be mediated exclusively through institutionalized forms of devotional practice exclusively or based on popular forms of late medieval piety. They extend their speculations on secrecy to the sphere of Biblical interpretation and aesthetics, primarily in Origenian, Augustinian, and pseudo-Dionysian terms. We have also seen, in Chapters 3 and 4, how Marguerite de Navarre sustains but also problematizes this distinction between secrecy as metaphysical union, on the one hand, and secrecy as prudence in court life, on the other.

In studying secrecy in courtly and religious works by early modern authors and in their patristic and medieval sources, I have focused on the metaphor of the cover because it has remained largely unstudied in contemporary humanistic scholarship despite its centrality and importance for the early modern French vernacular tradition. Together, secrecy and metaphors of covering appear at the very beginnings of the European and French vernacular literary

traditions, in their earliest and most monumental literary texts.¹ For instance, the idea that secular literature can help explore divine secrets influenced such authors as Dante—in his *Paradiso* and *Vita Nuova*, where Beatrice serves as a screen lady both hiding and disclosing divine mystery—as well as Chaucer, Marie de France, and Chrétien de Troyes.

This medieval tradition was first revived and reformulated in the early sixteenth-century French literary tradition by Clément Marot's translation of the prologue to the *Roman de la Rose*.² During that same period, Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Group of Meaux pursued their renewal of ancient and medieval models for understanding the place of fiction in devotional life and of devotional life in fiction, while Erasmus explored the possibilities of prophetic speech, inspired commentary, and Socratic dialectic, as we know from Screech's work.

The term *secretum* refers to the way the Divinity initiates those to whom it reveals its secrets. Throughout the Western tradition, pseudo-Dionysius's translators have used the terms *velamen*, *integumentum*, *couverture*, and *voiles sacrés* to translate his ideas on secrecy and divine mystery.³ Secrets enable transcendent truths to accommodate themselves to human finitude. The word *tectum*, or cover, reappears in connection with secrecy in pseudo-Dionysius's works, as it also does in Boccaccio's ideas on profane literature and Christian mysteries.

Secrecy represents a problem of sacred and profane values throughout the *Heptameron*. As I discussed in Chapter 4, Marguerite later adapted Christian humanist notions of secrecy to narrative fiction in her *nouvelles*, where devotional and courtly secrecy are brought together in an uneasy tension. In Chapter 4, I addressed how the *Heptameron's* narrative strategies develop secrecy through the themes of courtship and love service. Marguerite's *nouvelles* explore Lefèvre's, Briçonnet's, and Erasmus's spiritual anthropologies, and they combine them with what Marc Fumaroli has described as an anthropology of pathology and literary fiction. Marguerite opposes devotional mystery to the profane pursuit of honors, profits, and pleasures that I have discussed throughout the preceding chapters. The *Heptameron* explores the world of honor, profit, and pleasure, to which these other reformers had opposed spiritual secrecy. The *Heptameron* reflects critically through narrative

1 On the theme of the cover in the *Heptameron*, see Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *La conversation conteuse. Les nouvelles de Marguerite de Navarre* (Paris: P.U.F., 1992).

2 Peter Dronke, *Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism* (Leiden, Köln: Brill, 1974), 56, n. 1.

3 See Philippe Chevallier, *Dionysiaca* (Paris-Bruges: Desclée, de Brouwer & Cie, 1937) for the different terms used to translate pseudo-Dionysius's works.

on the ways in which previous humanist Evangelicals and Marguerite herself attempted to transfer philosophical ideas about secrecy into the spheres of religious, educational, and moral reform, through the medium of literature. Or, perhaps more aptly, we might say that Marguerite's narratives invite readers to consider carefully and critically the relations between these ideas about secrecy and these spheres of reform.

The *Heptameron* centers on the idea of secrecy, but clearly not on secrecy as divine immanence in the ways explored in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. In discussing the *Heptameron*, I have argued that the *nouvelles'* narratives are structured around the opposition between secrecy and news in ways that situate humanist Evangelical secrecy relative to other kinds of secrets. In emphasizing questions of genre, I have been arguing that, as modern secular critics of early modern devotional and courtly literature, we have a tendency to elide the *nouvelle* as a genre and as a mediating filter for these earlier philosophical and religious ideas. That is, the *Heptameron's* stories refract religious issues, and problems of secrecy in particular, through short narrative experiments. Like Erasmus's and Briçonnet's works, the *Heptameron* opposes spiritual secrecy to secrets that revolve around pleasure, profit, and honor. It invokes the three-fold Pauline distinction between spirit, soul, and body, thereby reflecting on the meaning of secrecy in devotional life. But it does these things by playing on secular narrative conventions that, I argue, should be taken into consideration when examining the connections between the *The Heptameron* and Marguerite's religious works.

The *Heptameron* represents the profane world, its motives and its events, in ways that test the limits of Evangelical devotion in relation to other spheres of civil and political life. Oisille recalls the rhetoric of early humanist Evangelism, and she represents a principle of Evangelical mystical unity. But we have also seen how Marguerite's stories explore the motives that corrupt this unity and how profane secrets conceal themselves in the domain of worldly, civic, and secular life, until they ultimately become disclosed before men and God through reversals within the narratives, which make the opposition between secrecy and news a central governing tension.

Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Works

Erasmus of Rotterdam

- Bedouelle, Guy. "Introduction to the *Apologia ad Fabrum*." In *Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem*, edited by Guy Bedouelle, i–xxvii. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- . *Le Quincuplex Psalterium de Lefèvre d'Etaples: un guide de lecture*. Droz, 1979.
- Bedouelle, Guy, and Bernard Roussel, eds. *Le temps des réformes et la Bible*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1989.
- Boyle, Marjorie O'Rourke. *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1977.
- . "Weavers, Farmers, Tailors, Travellers, Masons, Prostitutes, Pimps, Turks, Little Women, and Other Theologians." *Erasmus in English* 3 (1971): 1–7.
- Chantraine, Georges. *Erasme et Luther. Libre et serf arbitre: étude historique et théologique*. Paris: Éditions Lethielleux, 1981.
- . *Mystère et philosophie du Christ selon Erasme: étude de la lettre à P. Volz et de la "Ratio verae theologiae" (1518)*. Namur: Secrétariat des Publications, 1971.
- Chomarat, Jacques. "Sur Érasme et Origène." In *Colloque Érasmien de Liège: commémoration du 450^e Anniversaire de la mort d'Érasme*, edited by Jean-Pierre Massaut, 89–113. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1987.
- Dronke, Peter. *Fabula: Explorations Into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism*. Leiden: Brill, 1974.
- Erasmus. *The Adages of Erasmus*. Translated by Margaret Mann Phillips. Vol. 31, *Collected Works of Erasmus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- . *The Adages of Erasmus. Translations Selected from the Collected Works of Erasmus*. Edited by William Barker. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- . *Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem*. In *Controversies*, translated by Howard Jones, edited by Guy Bedouelle, 1–108. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- . *De sarcienda Ecclesiae concordia*. Translated by Raymond Himelick. Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Studies, 1971.
- . "Disputatiuncula de taedio, pavore, tristicia Iesu." In *Spiritualia and Pastoralia*, translated and edited by Michael Heath. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.
- . *Ecclesiastes sive Concionator Evangelicus*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1962.
- . *Enchiridion militis christiani*. Translated by Charles Fantazzi. Edited by John W. O'Malley. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

- . *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: Acts, Romans, I and II Corinthians: facsimile of the final Latin text with all earlier variants*. Edited by Anne Reeve and M.A. Screech. Leiden: Brill, 1990.
- . *Hyperaspistes*. In *Controversies*, edited by J.K. Sowards, 333–751. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- . "Letter to Paul Volz." In *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Selected Writings of Erasmus, With his Life by Beatus Rhenanus and a Biographical Sketch by the Editor*, edited by John C. Olin, 107–133. New York: Fordham University Press, 1987.
- . "Paraclesis." Translated by Pierre Mesnard. *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 13, 1 (1951): 26–34.
- . *Paraphrase on John*. Translated by Jane E. Phillips. Edited by Robert D. Sider. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.
- . *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*. Translated by John B. Payne, Albert Rabil Jr., and Warren S. Smith Jr. Edited by Robert D. Sider. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- . *The Praise of Folly*. Translated by Clarence H. Miller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- . *Ratio Verae Theologiae*. In *The Ecumenical Theology of Erasmus of Rotterdam: A Study of the Ratio Verae Theologiae Translated Into English and Annotated, With a Brief Account of his Ecumenical Writings and Activities Within his Lifetime*, edited by Donald Conroy. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1974.
- . "Sileni Alcibiadis." In *The Catholic Reformation: Savanarola to Ignatius of Loyola*, edited by John C. Olin, 65–89. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.
- Fokke, G.J. "An Aspect of the Christology of Erasmus of Rotterdam." *Ephemerides theologicae lovaniensis* 54 (1978): 161–87.
- Godin, André. "Erasme et le modèle origénien de la prédication." In *Colloquia erasmiana turonensia: stage international d'études humanistes (12th: 1969: Tours)*, edited by Jean-Claude Margolin, 807–20. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1972.
- . *Erasme lecteur d'Origène*. Geneva: Droz, 1982.
- Heath, Michael J. "Introduction." In *Expositions of the Psalms*, edited by Dominic Baker-Smith, xiii–lxxii. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- Marsh, David. "Erasmus on the Antithesis of Body and Soul." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 4 (1976): 673–88.
- Phillips, Margaret Mann. *Érasme et les débuts de la réforme française (1517–1536)*. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1978.
- . "Erasmus in France in the Later Sixteenth Century." *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971): 246–61.
- . "La 'Philosophia Christi' reflétée dans les 'Adages' d'Érasme." In *Courants religieux et humanisme à la fin du XV^e et au début du XVI^e siècle*, 53–71. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959.

- Screech, Michael. *Ecstasy and The Praise of Folly*. London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1980.
- Tracy, James. "Ad Fontes: The Humanist Understanding of Scripture as Nourishment for the Soul." In *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by Jill Raitt, Bernard McGinn, and John Meyendorff, 252–68. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987.
- . "Liberation Through the *Philosophia Christi*: Erasmus as a Reformer of Doctrine, 1514–1521." *Lutherjahrbuch* 62 (1995): 28–47.

Guillaume Briçonnet

- Vance, Jacob. "Préréforme et mysticisme: l'articulation du secret dans la correspondance de Guillaume Briçonnet et Marguerite de Navarre." In *D'un principe philosophique à un genre littéraire: les "Secrets,"* edited by Dominique de Courcelles, 241–262. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005.
- Veissière, Michel. "Guillaume Briçonnet et les courants spirituels italiens au début du XVI^e siècle." In *Échanges religieux entre la France et l'Italie du Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne*, edited by M. Maccarrone and A. Vauchez, 215–28. Geneva: Slatkine, 1987.
- . "Guillaume Briçonnet et l'Évangile selon Saint Jean." *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 79 (1995): 431–38.
- . "L'emploi de l'Écriture sainte par G. Briçonnet, Évêque de Meaux entre 1519 et 1524." *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 63, no. 3 (1979): 345–63.

Marguerite de Navarre

- Bedouelle, Guy. "Panorama religieux et politique." In *Guillaume Briçonnet et Marguerite de Navarre. Correspondance, 1521–1524*, edited by Christine Martineau, Michel Veissière, and Henry Heller, 1, 15–24, 129–31. Geneva: Droz, 1975.
- Briçonnet, Guillaume, and Queen Marguerite. *Correspondance*. 2 vols. Edited by Christine Martineau, Michel Veissière, and Henry Heller. Geneva: Droz, 1975.
- Cazauran, Nicole. "Amadis de Gaule en 1540: un nouveau 'roman de chevalerie'?" In *Les Amadis en France au XVI^e siècle*, 21–39. Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2000.
- . *L'Heptaméron de Marguerite de Navarre*. Paris: S.E.D.E.S., 1976. Reprint, 1991.
- Cholakian, Patricia Francis. *Rape and Writing in the Heptameron of Marguerite de Navarre*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.
- Cholakian, Rouben. "Volume Editor's Introduction." In *Marguerite de Navarre: Selected Writings, a Bilingual Edition*, edited and translated by Rouben Cholakian and Mary Skemp, 1–39. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

- Cottrell, Robert D. *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986.
- . "Inmost Cravings: The Logic of Desire in the *Heptameron*." In *Critical Tales: New Studies of the Heptameron and Early Modern Culture*, edited by John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley, 3–24. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.
- Dubois, Claude-Gilbert. "Fonds mythique et jeu des sens dans le Prologue." In *Etudes seiziémistes offertes à V. L. Saulnier*, edited by Robert Aulotte, 151–168. Geneva: Droz, 1980.
- Febvre, Lucien. *Amour sacré, amour profane: autour de l'Heptaméron*. Paris: Gallimard, 1944. Reprint, 1996.
- Ferguson, Gary, and Mary McKinley. "The *Heptaméron*: Word, Spirit, World." In *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, edited by Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, 323–371. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- . *Mirroring Belief: Marguerite de Navarre's Devotional Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992.
- . "Now in a Glass Darkly: The Textual Status of the *Je Parlant* in the *Miroir* of Marguerite de Navarre." *Renaissance Studies: Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 5, 4 (1991): 398–411.
- Ford, Phillip. "Themes of Neo-Platonic Ascent in Marguerite de Navarre." In *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, edited by Mary B. McKinley and Gary Ferguson, 89–108. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Garnier, Isabelle and Isabelle Pantin. "Opening and Closing Reflections: The *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* and the *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*." In *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, edited by Mary B. McKinley and Gary Ferguson, 109–160. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Gelernt, Jules. *World of Many Loves: The Heptameron of Marguerite de Navarre*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966.
- Glasson, Simone, ed. "Introduction." In *Les Prisons*. Geneva: Droz, 1978.
- Heller, Henry. "Marguerite de Navarre and the Reformers of Meaux." *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 33 (1971): 271–310.
- Hopkins, Lisa. "Renaissance Queens and Foucauldian Carcerality." *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 20, no. 2 (1996): 17–32.
- Jeanneret, Michel. "Du mystère à la mystification: le sens caché à la Renaissance et dans Rabelais." *Versants* 2 (1981): 31–52.
- Jourda, Pierre. *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre (1492–1549): étude biographique et littéraire*. 2 vols. Geneva: Slatkine, 1978.
- Kritzman, Lawrence D. "Verba Erotica: Marguerite de Navarre and the Rhetoric of Silence." In *The Rhetoric of Sexuality and the Literature of the French Renaissance*, 45–56. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

- Kocher, Suzanne. "Marguerite de Navarre's Portrait of Marguerite Porete: A Renaissance Queen Constructs a Medieval Woman Mystic." *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 26, Fall (1998): 17–23.
- Lajarte, Philippe de. "Autour d'un paradoxe: les Nouvelles de Marguerite de Navarre et sa correspondance avec Briçonnet." In *Marguerite de Navarre 1492–1992. Actes du colloque international de Pau (1992)*, ed. Nicole Cazauran and James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan: Editions InterUniversitaires, 1995), 593–634.
- Lebègue, Raymond. "La femme qui mutile son visage (*Heptaméron* X)." *Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres. Comptes rendus* (1959): 176–184.
- Leushuis, Reinier. "Dialogue, Self, and Free Will: Marguerite de Navarre's *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, and Petrarch's *Secretum*." *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 66, no. 1 (2004): 69–89.
- . "Spiritual Dialogues and Politics in the Correspondance between Marguerite de Navarre and Guillaume Briçonnet (1521–1524)." In *Between Scylla and Charybdis: Learned Letter Writers Navigating the Reefs of Religious and Political Controversy in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Jeanine de Landtsheer and Henk J.M. Nellen. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Losse, Deborah N. "Distortion as a Means of Reassessment: Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron* and the 'Querelle des Femmes'." *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 3 (1982): 75–84.
- Mall, Laurence. "'Pierres ou bestes.' Les corps dans la dixième nouvelle de l'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre." *French Forum* 27 (1992): 169–190.
- Masters, George Mallary. "La libération des prisons structurées: *Les Prisons* de Marguerite de Navarre." In *International Colloquium Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Birth of Marguerite de Navarre*, edited by Régine Reynolds-Cornell, 111–22. Birmingham, AL: Summa, 1995.
- Mathieu-Castellani, Gisèle. *La conversation conteuse. Les nouvelles de Marguerite de Navarre*. Paris: P.U.F., 1992.
- McKinley, Mary B. "Telling Secrets: Sacramental Confession and Narrative Authority in the *Heptaméron*." In *Critical Tales: New Studies of the Heptaméron and Early Modern Culture*, edited by John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley, 146–71. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.
- Miernowski, Jan. "L'intentionnalité dans l'*Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre." *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance* 63 (2001): 201–225.
- . "La parole entre l'Être et le Néant: 'Les Prisons' de Marguerite de Navarre aux limites de la poésie exégétique." *French Forum* 16 (1991): 261–84.
- . *Signes dissimilaires: la quête des noms divins dans la poésie française de la Renaissance*. Geneva: Droz, 1997.

- Müller, Catherine. "‘La lettre et la figure’: lecture allégorique du *Mirouer* de Marguerite Porete dans *Les Prisons* de Marguerite de Navarre." *Versants: Revue Suisse des Littératures Romanes* 38 (2000): 153–167.
- Navarre, Marguerite de. *The Heptameron*. Translated and edited by P.A. Chilton. London: Penguin Books, 1984.
- . *L’Heptaméron*. Edited by Michel François. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1996.
- . *Le MIROIR/De Treschrestienne/Princesse Marguerite/de France, Royné de Navarre,/Duchesse d’Alençon & de Berry, auquel elle voit/& son neant, & son/tout*. Paris: A. Augereau, 1533.
- . *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*. In *Selected Writings: A Bilingual Edition*, edited and translated by Rouben Cholakian and Skemp, 73–150. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- . *Les Prisons*. Edited by Simone Glasson. Geneva: Droz, 1978.
- . *Les Prisons*. Translated by Claire Lynch Wade. New York: P. Lang, 1989.
- . *The Prisons of Marguerite de Navarre*. Translated by Hilda Dale. Reading: Whiteknights, 1989.
- Parturier, Emile. "Les sources du mysticisme de Marguerite de Navarre: à propos d’un manuscrit inédit." *Revue de la Renaissance* 5 (1904): 1–16, 49–62.
- Regosin, Richard. "Désir du secret, secret du désir: *l’Heptaméron*." In *Mélanges de littérature française de la Renaissance offerts à Marcel Tetel*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1999.
- . "Leaky Vessels: Secrets of Narrative in the *Heptameron* and the Châtelaine’s Lament." *Mediaevalia: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Studies Worldwide* 22 (1999): 181–200.
- Robertson, Gwenette Orr. "Christ, the Double Mirror: Evangelism and Negative Theology in the Poem *Les Prisons* by Marguerite of Navarre." *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 4, no. 1 (2002): 35–47.
- Skenazi, Cynthia. "Les annotations en marge du *Miroir de l’ame pecheresse*." *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 55, no. 2 (1993): 255–70.
- . "‘*Les Prisons*’ Poetics of Conversion." In *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, edited by Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, 211–235. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Sommers, Paula. *Celestial Ladders: Readings in Marguerite de Navarre’s Poetry of Spiritual Ascent*. Geneva: Droz, 1989.
- . "The Mirror and Its Reflections: Marguerite de Navarre’s Biblical Feminism." *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 5, no. 1 (1986): 29–39.
- Stone, Donald. "Narrative Technique in *l’Heptaméron*." *Studi Francesi* 11 (1973): 435–447.
- Tetel, Marcel. "*L’Heptaméron*: première nouvelle et fonction des devisants." In *La nouvelle française à la Renaissance*, edited by Lionello Sozzi and V.L. Saulnier, 449–458. Geneva: Slatkine, 1981.

- . *Marguerite de Navarre's Heptaméron: Themes, Language and Structure*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1973.
- . "Une réévaluation de la dixième nouvelle de l'*Heptaméron*." *Neuphilologische mitteilungen* 72 (1971): 565–9.
- Thysell, Carol. *The Pleasure of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Turner, Denys. *The Darkness of God. Negativity in Christian Mysticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Vance, Jacob. "Humanist Polemics, Christian Morals: A Hypothesis on Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* and the Problem of Self-Love." *Modern Language Notes* 120, no. 1 supplement (1995): 81–95.

Other Works

- Auerbach, Erich. *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Augustine, Saint. *Augustine's The Trinity*. Edited by O.S.A. John E. Rotelle. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991.
- . *The City of God*. Edited by Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979.
- . *Confessions*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- . *The Confessions*. Edited by O.S.A. John E. Rotelle. Translated by O.S.B. Maria Boulding. New York: New City Press, 1997.
- . *On The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. Translated by Edmund Hill. New York: New City Press, 2002.
- . *Sermons on the New Testament*. Edited by O.S.A. John E. Rotelle. Translated by O.S.B. Edmund Hill, O.P. New York: New City Press, 1991.
- . *Sermons on the Saints*. Edited by O.S.A. John E. Rotelle. Translated by O.P. Edmund Hill. Charlottesville, Va: InteLex Corporation, 1994.
- Beer, Jeanette M.A. *Narrative Conventions of Truth in the Middle Ages*. Geneva: Droz, 1981.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "La Force du droit." *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 64 (1986): 3–19.
- Capellanus, Andreas. *De amore et amoris remedio*. London: Duckworth, 1982.
- Castiglione. *The Book of the Courtier*. Translated by George Bull. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967.
- Cave, Terence. *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

- Cerquiglini-Toulet. "Le clerc et l'écriture." In *Comme mon coeur désire: Guillaume de Machaut*, edited by Denis Hüe. Orléans: Paradigme, 2001.
- Chenu, Marie-Dominique. "Le socratisme chrétien." In *L'éveil de la conscience dans la civilisation médiévale, conférence Albert-Le-Grand*, 41–46. Montreal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1968.
- Chevalier, Bernard. *Guillaume Briçonnet (v. 1445–1514). Un cardinal-ministre au début de la Renaissance: marchand, financier, homme d'état et homme de l'église*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005.
- Chevallier, Philippe. *Dionysiaca*. Paris-Bruges: Desclée, de Brouwer & Cie, 1937.
- Coogan, Michael D., ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Courcelles, Pierre. "Tradition platonicienne et tradition chrétienne du corps prison." *Revue des études latines* 43 (1966): 406–33.
- Crouzet, Denis. *La genèse de la réforme française: 1520–1560*. Paris: Sedes, 1996.
- Cusa, Nicholas of. "De visione Dei." Translated by Jasper Hopkins. In *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism*. Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985.
- . "Dialogue on the Hidden God." In *Selected Spiritual Writings*. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.
- Déchanet, Jean. "Amor ipse intellectus est. La doctrine de l'amour-intellection chez Guillaume de Saint-Thierry." *Revue du Moyen Âge latin* 1 (1945): 349–74.
- Defaux, Gérard. "De la bonne nouvelle aux nouvelles: remarques sur la structure de l'Heptaméron." *French Forum* 27, no. 1 (2002): 23–43.
- . "Introduction." In *Hecatomphile. Les fleurs de poesie française*, edited by Gérard Defaux. Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 2002.
- . *Marot, Rabelais, Montaigne: l'écriture comme presence*. Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1987.
- . "Les deux amours de Clément Marot." *Rivista di letteratura moderna e comparata* 46 (1993): 1–30.
- Deproost, Paul-Augustin. "Au-delà de l'énigme, la béance de Dieu. Secret et intériorité dans les *Confessions* de Saint Augustin." In *Le secret: motif et moteur de la littérature*, edited by Chantal Zabus, 37–62. Louvain-la-Neuve: Collège Érasme, Bureau du Recueil, 1999.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Force de loi*. Paris: Galilée, 1994.
- d'Etaples, Jacques Lefèvre. *Commentarii initiatorii in qvatvor Evangelia. In Euangelium secundum Matthaeum. In Euangelium secundum Marcum. In Euangelium secundum Lucam. In Euangelium secundum Ioannem*. Basileae: A. Cratandri, 1523.
- . *S. Pauli Epistolae xiv ex Vulgata, adiecta intelligentia ex graeco cum commentariis*. Paris: Henri Estienne, 1512. Reprint, Faksimilie-Neudruck der Ausgabe. Stuttgart, 1978.

- . *Theologia vivificans. Cibus solidus. Dionysii Celestis hierarchia. Ecclesiastica hierarchia. Divina nomina. Mystica theologia. Undecim epistole. Ignatii Undecim epistole. Polycarpi Epistola una*. Paris: Henri Estienne, 1515.
- Dihle, Albrecht. *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*. Sather Classical Lectures, vol. 48. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- Diu, Isabelle. *Mémoire des chevaliers: édition, diffusion et réception des romans de chevalerie du XVII^e au XX^e siècle*. Paris: École des Chartres, 2007.
- Dronke, Peter. *Fabula: Explorations Into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism*. Leiden: Brill, 1974.
- Eckhart, Meister. *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense*. Edited by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and Bernard McGinn. The Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.
- . *Sermons*. Edited by Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache. 2 vols. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978.
- Festugière, A. Marie. "La Trichotomie de 1 *Thess.*, v, 23, et la philosophie grecque." *Recherches de science religieuse* 20, no. 5 (1930): 385–415.
- Fizmyer, Joseph A. *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Fumaroli, Marc. "Jacques Amyot and the Clerical Polemic Against the Chivalric Novel." *Renaissance Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1985): 22–40.
- Gilson, Étienne. *Introduction à la philosophie chrétienne*. Paris: Vrin, 1960.
- . "La connaissance de soi-même et le socratisme chrétien." In *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, 214–33. Paris: Vrin, 1989. Reprint, 2.
- . *La théologie mystique de Saint Bernard*. Paris: Vrin, 1986.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *Myths, Emblems, Clues*. Translated by John and Anne C. Tedeschi. London: Hutchinson Radius, 1990.
- Hadot, Pierre. *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*. Paris: Institut d'Études Augustinienne, 1993.
- . *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Translated by Michael Chase. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1995.
- . *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997.
- Heller-Roazen, Daniel. *Fortune's Faces: The Roman de la Rose and the Poetics of Contingency*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe. *Lefèvre: Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Renewal in France*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984.
- Ivánka, Endre von. *Plato christianus: la réception critique du platonisme chez les Pères de l'Église*. Translated by Elisabeth Kessler. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990.
- Jaeger, Stephen. *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

- Jauss, H.R. "La transformation de la forme allégorique entre 1180 et 1240: d'Alain de Lille à Guillaume de Lorris." In *L'humanisme médiéval dans les littératures romanes du XII^e Au XIV^e Siècle*, edited by A. Fourrier, 107–144. Paris: Klincksieck, 1964.
- Javelet, Robert. *Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle*. 2 vols. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967.
- Jeanneret, Michel. "Du mystère à la mystification: le sens caché à la Renaissance et dans Rabelais." *Versants* 2 (1981): 31–52.
- Jouanna, Arlette. *La France de la Renaissance: histoire et dictionnaire*. Edited by Guy Schoeller. Paris: Roberts Lafont, 2001.
- Keller, Hildegard Elisabeth. *My Secret is Mine. Studies on Religion and Eros in the German Middle Ages*. Leuven: Peeters, 2000.
- . "Segreti. Uno studio semantico sulla mistica femminile medievale." *Storia delle donne* 1 (2005): 201–20.
- Kermode, Frank. *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- . "Secrets and Narrative Sequence." In *Essays on Fiction (1971–1982)*, 135–155. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
- Kittel, Gerhard, Friedrich Gerhard, and Geoffrey William Bromiley. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985.
- Köhler, Erich. *L'aventure chevaleresque: idéal et réalité dans le romans courtois*. Translated by par Éliane Kaufholz. Paris: Gallimard, 1974.
- Ladner, Gerhart. *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*. 2nd ed. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1959. Reprint, New York: Harper & Row, 1967.
- . "Vegetation Symbolism and the Concept of Renaissance." In *De artibus opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, edited by Millard Meiss, 303–22. New York: New York University Press, 1961.
- Langer, Ullrich. *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Boccaccio to Corneille*. Geneva: Droz, 1994.
- Langer, Ullrich and Jan Miernowski, eds. *Anteros: actes du colloque de madison (Wisconsin), mars 1994*. Orléans: Paradigme, 1994.
- Leclercq, Dom Jean. "Pour l'histoire de l'expression 'philosophie chrétienne.'" *Mélanges de science religieuse* 9 (1952): 221–226.
- Le Gall, Jean Marie. "The Reasons for Remaining Catholic." In *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, edited by Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, 59–89. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Libera, Alain de. *Eckhart, Suso, Tauler et la divinisation de l'homme*. Paris: Flammarion, 1993.
- . *La mystique rhénane: d'Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994.

- Lotman, Jurij M. "The Origin of the Plot in the Light of Typology." *Poetics Today* 1, nos. 1–2 (1979): 161–184.
- Lubac, Henri de. *Exegèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*. 4 vols. Paris: Aubier, 1959–64.
- Margolin, Jean-Claude. "Bovelles et son commentaire de l'Évangile johannique." In *Philosophies de la Renaissance*, 89–115. Orléans: Paradigme, 1998.
- . "Pic de la Mirandole et Erasme de Rotterdam." In *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: convegno internazionale di studi nel cinquecentesimo anniversario della morte (1494–1994)*, edited by Gian Carlo Garfagnini. Firenze: Olschki, 1997.
- Marin, Louis. "Secret, dissimulation et art de persuader chez Pascal." *Versants* 2 (1981): 53–74.
- Marot, Clément. *Oeuvres poétiques complètes*. Edited by Gérard Defaux. 2 vols. Paris: Bordas, 1990.
- Martin, Luther H. "Secrecy in Hellenistic Religious Communities." In *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in The History of Mediterranean And Near Eastern Religions*, edited by Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa, 101–21. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Massaut, Jean Pierre. *Critique et tradition à la veille de la réforme en France. Étude suivie de textes inédits traduits et annotés*. Paris: Vrin, 1974.
- McEnvoy, James. "Biblical and Platonic Measure." In *Eriugena: East and West. Papers of the Eighth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies Chicago and Notre Dame 18–20 October 1991*, edited by Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten, 153–78. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994.
- McGinn, Bernard. "Love, Knowledge, and *Unio Mystica* in the Western Christian Tradition." In *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, edited by Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn, 59–86. New York: Macmillan, 1989.
- Méjean-Thiolier, Suzanne and Marie-Françoise Notz-Grob, eds. *Nouvelles courtoises: occitanes et françaises*. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1997.
- Ménard, Philippe. "La réception des romans de chevalerie à la fin du Moyen Âge et au XVI^e siècle." *Bulletin bibliographique de la société internationale arthurienne* 49 (1997): 234–273.
- Miernowski, Jan. *Le dieu néant: théologies négatives à l'aube des temps modernes*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.
- Mölk, Ulrich. *Französische literarästhetik des 12. und 13. jahrhunderts; Prologe, Exkurse, Epiloge*. Sammlung Romanischer Übungstexte, vol. 54. Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1969.
- Moos, Peter von. "Literary Aesthetics in the Latin Middle Ages." In *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 100–1540*, edited by Constant J. Mews et al., 81–98. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2003.
- Origen. *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis*. Edited by J.P. Migne. *Patrologiae Graecae*, vol. 14. Paris: Frères Garnier, 1857–1903.

- . *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2001.
- . *De principiis*. Edited by J.P. Migne. *Patrologiae Graecae*, vol. 11. Paris: Frères Garnier, 1857–1903.
- . *De principiis*. Edited by J.P. Migne. *Patrologiae Graecae*, vol. 12. Paris: Frères Garnier, 1857–1903.
- . *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. Translated by Ronald E. Heine. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982.
- . *Homilies on Jeremiah*. Translated by John Smith. Washington: The Catholic University Press, 1994.
- . *In Jeremiam homilia*. Edited by J.P. Migne. *Patrologiae Graecae*, vol. 13. Paris: Frères Garnier, 1857–1903.
- Ossola, Carlo. "Verbum et secretum (des Pères de l'Eglise et de Pétrarque)." *Versants* 3 (1982): 23–44.
- Patch, Howard R. *The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature*. New York: Octagon Books, 1967.
- Petrarca, Francesco. *Secretum. Il mio segreto*. Edited by Enrico Fenzi. Milan: Mursia, 1992.
- Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni. *Heptaplus*. Translated by Douglas Carmichael. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1965.
- Plotinus. *The Enneads*. Translated by Stephen MacKenna. Burdett, NY: Larson Publications, 1992.
- . *Traité* 38. Edited by Pierre Hadot. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1988.
- Poirion, Daniel. "Qu'est-ce que la littérature? France 1100–1600." In *What Is Literature? France 1100–1600*, edited by François Cornilliat, Ullrich Langer, and Douglas Kelly. Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum Publishers, 1993.
- Porrete, Marguerite. *The Mirror of Simple Souls*. Translated by Ellen L. Babinsky. Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.
- Pouillon, Henri. "Le premier traité des propriétés transcendentes." *Revue néoscholastique de philosophie* 42 (1939): 40–77.
- Pseudo-Dionysius. *The Complete Works*. Translated by Colm Luibhéid and Paul Rorem. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.
- Reid, Jonathan. *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549)*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Renaudet, Augustin. *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494–1517)*. 2nd ed. Genève: Slatkine, 1981.
- Rorem, Paul. *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols Within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984.
- Ruello, Francis. "La mystique de l'Exode (Exode 3, 14 selon Thomas Gallus, commentateur dionysien, † 1246)." In *Dieu et l'être. Exégèses d'Exode 3, 14 et de Coran 20, 11–24*, edited by Paul Vignaux, 213–43. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978.

- Scheck, Thomas P. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.
- Sedley, Long. *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Simmel, Georg. *Sociology: Inquiries Into the Construction of Social Forms*. Translated by Anthony J. Blasi, Anton K. Jacobs, and Mathew Kanjirathinkal. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Snyder, Jon R. *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.
- Stroumsa, Guy G. "From Esotericism to Mysticism in Early Christianity." In *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, edited by Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- . *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*. Vol. 70, Studies in the History of Religions. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- Struever, Nancy. *Theory as Practice: Ethical Inquiry in the Renaissance*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992.
- Thompson, Emily. "Une merveilleuse espece d'animal': Fable and Verisimilitude in Bonaventure des Périers's *Nouvelles recreation et joyeux devis*." In *Narrative Worlds: Essays on the Nouvelles in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century France*, edited by Gary Ferguson and David LaGuardia, 17–33. Tempe, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2005.
- Turner, Denys. *The Darkness of God. Negativity in Christian Mysticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Vance, Jacob. "Humanist Polemics, Christian Morals: A Hypothesis on Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* and the Problem of Self Love." *MLN* 120, no. 1 (2005): 181–95.
- Vasiliu, Anca. *Du diaphane. Image, milieu, lumière dans la pensée antique et médiévale*. Paris: Vrin, 1997.
- Verbeke, Gérard. *L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma, du stoïcisme à s. Augustin*. Louvain: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1945.
- Vial, Marc. *Jean Gerson. Théoricien de la théologie mystique*. Paris: Vrin, 2006.
- Vignaux, Paul, ed. *Dieu et l'être. Exégèses d'Exode 3,14 et de Coran 20, 11–24*. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978.
- Walker, D.P. "Origène en France au début du XVI^e siècle." In *Courants religieux et humanisme à la fin du XV^e et au début du XVI^e Siècle*, 101–19. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959.
- . "The *Prisca Theologia* in France." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27, no. 3–4 (1954): 204–55.
- Wanegffelen, Thierry. *Ni Rome ni Genève: des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVI^e siècle*. Paris: Champion, 1997.
- Zabus, Chantal, ed. *Le secret: motif et moteur de la littérature*. Louvain-La-Neuve: Collège Erasme, Bureau de Recueil, 1999.

Zum Brunn, Émilie. "L'exégèse augustinienne de 'Ego sum qui sum' et la 'Métaphysique de l'Exode.'" In *Dieu et l'être. Exégèses d'Exode 3, 14 et de Coran 20, 11–24*, edited by Paul Vignaux, 141–64. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978.

———. *St. Augustine: Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Ruth Namad. New York: Paragon House, 1988.

Zumthor, Paul. *Langue, texte, énigme*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975.

Index

- abditum mentis* 11, 11n21
abyss 12–13, 29n27, 67–69, 82–83, 93, 101, 126n96
acies mentis 6
adiaphora 24, 24n14, 37n50
adventure 4n5, 145, 146n31, 155
aenigma 16n28
agriculture, imagery 5, 6, 42, 79, 81, 85, 149
allegory 83, 111, 133–135, 137, 140n23, 154, 159
Amyot, Jacques 135n14
Anthropology, spiritual 3–4, 7, 20–21, 49, 50, 54, 56, 58, 64, 70, 78, 85, 86, 135n14, 161
apex mentis 6
Apostolic Christianity 2, 16, 31, 38, 157–158
Aristotle 18, 36n48
Auerbach, Erich 79–80, 83, 133n10
Augustine, Saint 2, 4, 7, 7n13, 11–14, 15n26, 16, 18–19, 22, 35, 54, 60, 71–74, 75n57, 79, 80n64, 81, 87n4, 87n5, 88n6, 97n25, 101n34, 117, 121n85, 126n96, 133, 138n19
Bedouelle, Guy 17n30, 20n2, 50n1, 52, 60n23
Beer, Jeannette M. A. 133n10
Boccaccio, Giovanni 16, 19, 125n93, 135n12, 139, 140, 161
Bourdieu, Pierre 43n70,
Boyle, Marjorie O'Rourke 26m18, 27, 47
Brignonnet, Guillaume 1, 13, 17, 18, 49, 50–85, 86, 92n13, 101n34, 102, 104n38, 105n39, 106, 108n47, 131, 138n19, 139n20, 160, 161
Calvin, John 4, 85
Capellanus, Andreas 114
Castiglione, Baltazar 19, 114, 115n65
Cave, Terence 26m15
Cazauran, Nicole 158n52
Cerquiglini-Toulet, Jacqueline 134n11, 135
Chantraine, Georges 14n24
Châtelaïne de Vergi 113
Chenu, Marie-Dominique 93n17
Chevalier, Bernard 53n7
Chevallier, Philippe 161n3
Cholakian, Rouben 86n2, 90m10, 153n43
Chomarat, Jacques 3n1
Cicero 13n23, 15n26, 16, 18
Colet, John 20, 21–23
conter 134n11, 135
conversion 94–95, 108n47, 111, 119, 120
Cottrell, Robert 11n20, 90n9, 95n19, 130
courtly love 1, 108, 110–113, 115–117, 119, 125, 141, 143n28, 146, 148–150, 157
cover 2, 15–17, 26, 29n27, 34, 41n64, 42, 81, 89, 92, 95, 99, 100, 109, 110, 111, 112, 116, 118, 119, 120, 124, 125, 128, 143, 147, 153, 154, 155, 160, 161
Crouzet, Denis 52n4
Cusa, Nicholas of 55, 62, 70, 73, 74, 76, 105
Déchanet, Jean 5n8
decorum 38, 116, 132, 141, 155
Defaux, Gérard 51n2, 89n7, 114n64, 130
Deproost, Paul-Augustin 71n48
Derrida, Jacques 43n70
detachment 14, 69, 108, 109, 126, 129n102, 139
Dihle, Albrecht 14n24
dire 133–135
Diu, Isabelle 136n14
Dronke, Peter 15, 125n93, 161n2
Duval, Edwin 130
Eckhart, Meister 5n8, 12n21, 126n96
Ecstasy 55, 56, 76, 103
Erasmus, of Rotterdam
Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum
Stapulensem 17n30, 20n2, 50n1
Commentary on Psalm 33 46, 48
De sarcienda ecclesiae concordia 31n35
“Disputatiuncula de taedio, pavore, tristitia Iesu” 22–23
Enchiridion 23, 24n14, 27, 29n27, 30–39
Expositions on the Psalms 21
Hyperaspistes 29n27
“Letter to Volz” 30–31, 36
“Paraclesis” 21n3, 36n49
Paraphrases on John 28n26, 29n27
Paraphrases on Romans 21, 30, 32, 34, 38
Ratio verae theologiae 25, 26, 30
“Sileni Alcibiadis” 39–49
The Praise of Folly 24n14, 46

- Erasmus, of Rotterdam (*cont.*)
 "War is Sweet to Those Who Have not
 Tried It" 29n27, 35
 everything 8n68, 119, 82n70, 103, 126, 127
- Febvre, Lucien 50n1, 144n29
 Fenzi, Enrico 87n4
 Ferguson, Gary 130, 132n6, 133n7–9, 143n28,
 154n44, 158n55
 Festugière, Marie A. 3n4
 Ficino, Marsilio 40n59, 104n38
 Fizmyer, Joseph A. 29n28
 Fokke, Gerard J. 22n5,
 Ford, Philip 94n18, 104n34, 108n46,
 formlessness 65, 66, 67, 69, 70
 form, power of 43
 Fortune 24, 34, 117, 132, 137, 145, 146, 146n31,
 147, 148, 149, 151, 152n41, 153
 Francis I 52, 53, 140, 157n52
 friendship 111, 141–151, 154n45, 155, 157
 Fumaroli, Marc 135, 135n14, 161
- Gall, Jean Marie le 51n3
 Garnier, Isabelle 90n9, 91n11, 95n20, 100n32
 Gelernt, Jules 141n25
 Genesis, Book of 6, 10, 31, 60, 73, 76, 77
 Gilson, Étienne 7n14, 93, 93n17, 96n22
 Ginzburg, Carlo 75n56
 Glasson, Simone 87n3
 Godin, André 3n1, 9n17, 21, 25n15, 27, 27n23
 Group of Meaux 18, 50, 52, 53, 54, 64, 73, 76,
 161
- Hadot, Pierre 38n53, 70n44, 70n45, 137n17
 Holy Spirit 8, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 48, 56, 57, 58,
 79, 82, 92, 102, 103, 105, 128, 129, 136
 Heath, Michael J. 21, 22n5, 23n9, 35, 35n47,
 47n83
hegemonikon 5, 6, 6n11
 Heller, Henry 52, 53n6
 Heller-Roazen, Daniel 146n31
 hermeneutics 3, 4, 8, 10, 30, 51, 52, 54,
 honor 13, 14, 31, 32, 35, 82, 83, 98n27, 99, 100,
 102n35, 113, 114, 130, 132, 132n6, 133, 139, 141,
 142, 143, 143n28, 144, 146, 154, 156, 159, 161, 162
 Hughes, Philip Edgumbe 53n8
 human persona 3, 3n2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 17, 23,
 29, 30, 31, 34, 36, 40, 50, 51, 54, 56, 57, 58, 61,
 62, 64, 85, 102
 humility 80, 81, 90, 92, 96, 101, 102, 106, 136
- illumination 55, 59, 60, 63, 78, 92n13, 94, 95,
 98, 99, 105, 109, 120, 121
 immanence 17, 18, 54–59, 63, 71, 79, 94, 123,
 162
 indifferents. *See adiaphora*
 infinite 14, 55, 58, 63, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76, 81, 82,
 88, 89, 93n16, 103, 104, 105
integumentum 15, 15n28, 16, 17, 160, 161
 intellect 58, 59, 69n43, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76, 127
 Ivánka, Endre von 3n4, 6n11
- Jaeger, Stephen 141, 141n24
 Jaus, Hans Robert 133n10, 134, 135, 135n12
 Javelet, Robert 94n17
 Jeanneret, Michel 39n57
 Jouanna, Arlette 51n3
- Keller, Hildegard Elisabeth 111n55
 Kermode, Frank 131, 131n4, 132, 155
 Kocher, Suzanne 125n94
 Köhler, Erich 141, 141n24
kruphian 66, 66n37
krupho 66n37
- Ladner, Gerhart 78, 78n62, 85n74, 91n11
 Langer, Ullrich 114n64, 134n10, 141, 141n24
 Leclercq, Jean 7n14
 Lebègue, Raymond 144n29
 Lefève d'Étaples, Jacques 17, 20n2, 21, 22,
 22n5, 49, 50n1, 53, 53n8, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59,
 60n25, 62, 64, 64n33, 67, 67, 78n63, 86, 106,
 160, 161
 Leushius, Reinier 72, 87n4
 Libera, Alain de 5n8, 6n11, 12n21, 98n26
logos 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 25, 27, 30, 33, 36, 103
 Long, A. A. 24n14, 37n50
 Lotman, Juri M. 131n4
 love service 110, 113, 119, 130, 141, 142, 143, 148,
 149, 151, 155, 156, 157, 161
 Lubac, Henri de 3n1, 39n59
 Luther, Martin 21, 85
- Macrobius 16, 16n28
 Mall, Laurence 144n29
 Margolin, Jean-Claude 27n23, 40n59, 92n13
 Marin, Louis 39n57
 Marot, Clément 89n7, 134
 Marsh, David 20n1
 Martin, Luther H. 66n37
 Massaut, Jean-Pierre 3n1

- McEnvoy, James 72n52
 McGinn, Bernard 5n8
 McKinley, Mary 51n1, 86n2, 130, 130n2, 131, 131n3, 132n6, 133n7, 133n8, 133n9, 143n28, 154n44, 158n55
 Méjean-Thiolier, Suzanne 132n5
 Ménard, Philippe 158n2
mens 11, 27, 28, 29, 56, 57, 60n25
 metaphor 15, 16, 26, 34, 36n48, 41, 57, 67, 76, 78, 85n76, 87, 89, 91, 97, 102, 105, 108n46, 127n99, 160
 Miernowski, Jan 56n13, 114n64, 121n85, 130, 130n1, 158n53, 158n54
 mind. *See mens*
 Mirandola, Giovanni Pico della 39n59
Mirror of Simple Souls. *See* Porete, Marguerite
 Mölk, Ulrich 133n10
 Moos, Peter von 15, 15n28, 16, 16n28, 125n93
 mortification 75, 77, 78, 81, 82, 84, 102
 Müller, Catherine 125n94
mysterium 16n28, 67
 mystery 1, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 34, 42, 44, 48, 49, 52, 61, 72, 74, 75, 78, 98, 100, 111n55, 119, 134, 157, 159, 161
mysterion 66n37, 75
 Navarre, Marguerite de
 Heptameron 13, 19, 108, 113, 114, 124, 130–159
 Mirror of the Sinful Soul 18, 86, 87, 90–107
 The Prisons 107–113, 115–129
 news 19, 34, 130, 131n4, 132, 136, 137, 138,
 nothing 70, 91, 92, 94, 96, 102, 103, 104, 105, 109, 111, 116, 119, 120, 121, 121n85, 124, 126, 127, 127n99, 128, 129, 143n28, 146, 151, 152, 153, 154n45, 157, 159, 162
 Notz-Grob, Marie-Françoise 132n5
 Origen 2–11, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 45, 46n77, 51, 54, 160
 Ossola, Carlo 75n57
 Pantin, Isabelle 90n9
 parable 16n28, 26, 31, 40, 41, 43, 51, 79, 80, 85, 102
 Parturier, Emile 98n26
 Patch, Howard, R. 146n31
 Paul, Saint 3, 7, 21, 29n28, 45, 48, 51, 54, 56, 76, 80, 81, 106, 107
 persona. *See* human persona
 Petrarca, Francesco 19, 75n57
 Phillips, Margaret Mann 29n27, 50n1
 Pizan, Christine de 114
 Plotinus 69, 70, 71, 74
pneuma 7
pneumatikos 28, 29n28
 Porete, Marguerite 19, 125–129
 Poirion, Daniel 133n10
 Pouillon, Henri 73n52
 power of form 43
principale cordis 5, 6
 propriety. *See* decorum
 pseudo-Dionysius 16, 18, 21, 55, 62, 65, 66, 67, 73, 76, 81
psychikos 29, 29n28
Querelle des amies 114
Querelle des femmes 114
 reason 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 23n10, 29n27, 43, 46n77, 56, 58, 59, 60, 60n25, 61, 62, 63, 64, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, 125, 144, 145, 146, 149, 150, 152, 160
 Reid, Jonathan A. 50n1, 86n1
 Regosin, Richard 131n3
rien. *See* nothing
 Robertson, Gwenette Orr 124n89
 Ruello, Francis 5n8, 121n85
 Saint Paul 3, 7, 21, 29n28, 45, 48, 51, 54, 56, 76, 80, 81, 106n43, 107
 Scheck, Thomas P. 21n4
scintilla animae. *See* synderesis
 Screech, Michael 3n1, 24n14, 30n29, 37, 37n50, 46, 47n83, 48, 48n83, 48n84
 screens 113, 143, 152, 162
 secrecy 1, 2, 3, 8–19, 20, 26, 27, 30, 32, 34, 36, 39, 41n64, 43, 44, 45, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 56, 58, 59, 59n19, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 75n57, 76, 79, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 92n14, 94, 95, 95n19, 97, 99, 100, 101, 103, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111, 111n55, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 119, 123, 124, 125, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 136n14, 137, 138, 138n19, 141, 142, 143, 143n28, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 154, 154n45, 155, 156, 157, 159, 160, 161, 162
 secrets 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 12n21, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16n28, 17, 19, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 36,

secrets (*cont.*)

39n57, 40, 40n59, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 51,
54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 61n25, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67,
69, 70, 71, 71n48, 72, 73, 74, 75, 75n57, 76, 77,
78, 79, 81, 88, 88n6, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 99,
102, 103, 105, 106, 106n43, 107, 109, 110, 113,
114n62, 115, 117, 118, 119, 120, 124, 124n90, 125,
125n93, 126, 126n96, 128, 130, 131, 131n4, 132,
133, 137, 141, 142, 143, 145, 146, 147, 147n32,
149, 151, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 161, 162

secretum 75, 75n57, 87n4, 161

Sedley, D. N. 24n14, 37n50

seeds 5, 6, 7, 31, 36, 78, 80

self-annihilation 68, 81, 83

self-deception 2, 13, 88, 110, 118, 120

self-knowledge 56, 60, 61, 91, 93, 93n17, 96,
98, 99, 122

self-love 87, 100, 101, 103, 108, 120, 128, 132n6

sermo humilis 79, 80

sileni 20, 39–49

Simmel, Georg 111n55

simplicity 26–30

sin 2, 13, 22, 23, 34, 54, 58, 59, 69, 78, 82, 89,
91, 92, 96–99, 103, 117, 120, 122–124, 138, 159

Skenazi, Cynthia 94n18, 95n20, 108n47

Snyder, Jon R. 59n19

Socrates 39, 40, 41, 43, 46

Sommers, Paula 91n12,

soul 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, 21,
22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39,
40, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 54, 55–60, 61–64,
69, 70, 74, 76, 78–82, 84–87, 89–95, 98, 99,
100, 101–105, 107, 109, 121, 122, 124, 126, 127,
137–139, 148, 151, 162

spark of the soul. *See scintilla animae*

spirit 3, 3n2, 3n3, 3n4, 4, 6–13, 17, 20, 21,
21n2, 22, 23, 23n8, 24, 24n14, 26–32, 34–39,
42, 45–50, 54, 56, 56n13, 57–62, 64, 70–71,
76–79, 80–82, 88, 88n5, 88n6, 89, 89n6, 92,
99, 102–103, 105, 126n96, 128–129, 135n14,
136, 139, 140n23, 162

spiritual anthropology 3, 3n3, 21, 50, 54, 56,
58, 64, 86

spiritual psychology 1, 3, 17, 23, 62, 79, 82,
94n17

spiritus evangelicus 28

Stone, Donald 144n29

Stroumsa, Guy G. 75n57

Struever, Nancy 64n33

suffering servant 46–48

symbols, Biblical 65

synderesis 29n27, 85, 85n75, 104

Tetel, Marcel 134n10, 144n29

Thysell, Carol 16, 16n29, 135n12

Thompson, Emily 133n9

Tout. *See* everything

Tracy, James 28n25, 36n48

transcendence 17, 18, 63, 71, 79, 82, 94,
158n53

transumptio. *See* metaphor

Troyes, Chrétien de 141, 161

Turner, Denys 111n55

typology 40, 41, 46, 110, 131n4

unfamiliar 111, 111n55

union 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 54, 56–57, 58, 59, 62, 70,
76, 78, 79, 81, 85, 90, 99, 100, 104, 106, 115,
138, 139, 158, 160

Valla, Lorenzo 21, 21n3, 54

Vance, Jacob 51n1

Vasiliu, Anca 105n39

veil 15, 16, 41n64, 48, 55, 66, 67, 97, 143, 154,
154n45, 160

Veissière, Michel 52n5, 53, 53n9, 92n13

Verbeke, Gérard 28n24

Vial, Marc 5n8

Volz, Paul 30

Wanegffelen, Thierry 51n3

Zum Brunn, Émilie 121n85

Zumthor, Paul 133n10, 134n11